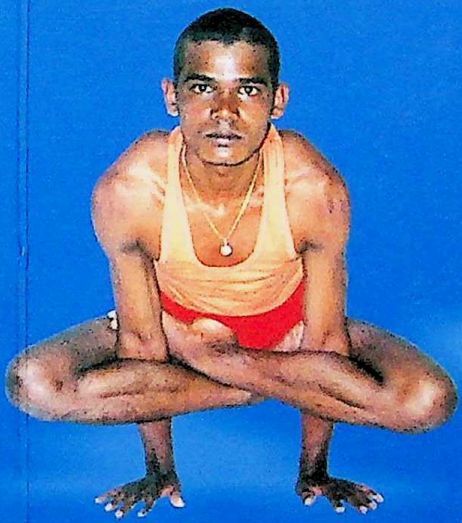
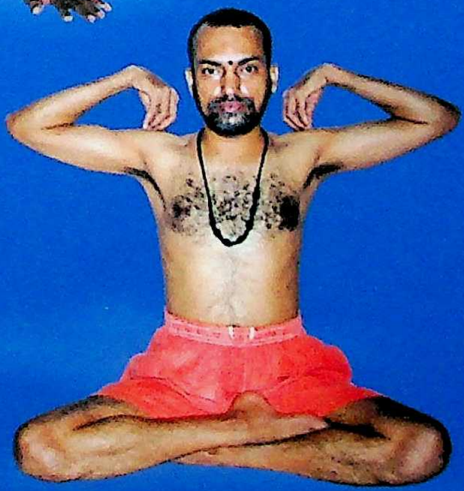
The Holistic Yoga







Swami Shantidharmananda Saraswati

Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

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I Dedicate
this small work

to the gracious feet of

my Grandmaster
Paramahansa Swami Sivananda Saraswati
of Divine Life Society, Rishikesh, Uttaranchal

and

my Master
Paramahansa Swami Satyananda Saraswati
of Bihar School of Yoga, Munger, Bihar

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The Holistic Yoga

Swami Shantidharmananda Saraswati

Srikunj Sadbhavana Manch
New Delhi

Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

Cataloging in Publication Data — DK

Shantidharmananda Saraswati, *Swami*, 1960 –
The holistic yoga.
Includes index.

1. Yoga. 2. Yoga — Therapeutic use.
I. Title.

ISBN 81-8265-000-3
First Published in India in 2004
Second impression in 2006
© Motilal Bhimraj Charitable Trust, New Delhi.

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Published by:
Srikunj Sadbhavana Manch
'Sri Kunj', F-52, Bali Nagar
New Delhi - 110 015

Distributed by:
D.K. Printworld (P) Ltd.
Regd. office : *'Sri Kunj'*, F-52, Bali Nagar
New Delhi - 110 015
Phones : (011) 2545-3975; 2546-6019
Fax : (011) 2546-5926
E-mail: dkprintworld@vsnl.net
Web: www.dkprintworld.com

Other places of availability:

Satya Darshan Ashram
294, Shisham Jhadi
Rishikesh - 249 201 (Uttara.)
Phone : (0135) 243 6291
E-mail: sdsarasvati@rediff.com

Dr. Bharat Jhunjhunwala
A-732, Modern Society
Sector-15, Rohini
New Delhi - 110 085
Phone : (011) 2722 8589; 2789 3673

Printed by: D.K. Printworld (P) Ltd., New Delhi.

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Preface

oṁ śrī patañjālaye namaḥ ।
oṁ śrī sarasvatyai namaḥ ॥

WHAT IS YOGA?

YOGA is a way of living a complete life. It is a method which overhauls all aspects of the human personality. It is a system of integral and spiritual education, education not only of the body and the mind or the intellect but also of the inner spirit. It shows you the marvellous method of rising from evil to good, and from goodness to holiness and then to eternal divine splendour. It is an art of right living. A *yogī*, who has learned the art of right living is happy, harmonious, peaceful and tension-free.

Yoga is a science, perfected by ancient seers, i.e., *ṛṣi*s not merely of India but of humanity, as a whole. It is an exact science, a perfect practical system of self-culture. Thus, Yoga does make or does not require turning away from life. It just demands transformation and spiritualization of life, because it is a way of life, not something that is divorced from common life. Yoga does not say to forsake action but teaches to do with efficient performance in the right-spirit.

So, Yoga is for all and is universal. It is not a sectarian affair but a way of God realization and not a creed. The practice of Yoga is not opposed to any religion or any sacred Church, Mosque, Temple, Monastery, etc. It is purely spiritual and

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universal and, thus, does not contradict anyone's sincere faith. Therefore, Yoga is not a religion, but an aid to the practise of the basic spiritual truths of all religions.

Yoga is a very very ancient science that flourished in the world and, especially, in India. It is an inseparable part of every Indian's life. But now it is being accepted, the world over, again, and is becoming part of every man's existence. The Vedic *mantra*s and the Upaniṣads have deeply elucidated this science. But being a very intricate subject, it is difficult to comprehend. This is the reason why the *ṛṣi*s and *yogī*s created so many texts so as to make the subject easier. Some very reliable and authentic texts that delve into the science of Yoga are — *Pātañjala Yoga-Sūtra, Yogī Yājñavalkya-Saṁhitā, Gheraṇḍa-Saṁhitā, Śiva-Saṁhitā, Bṛhada-Yoga-Sopāna, Haṭha-Yoga-Pradīpikā*, etc. The finer aspects of Yoga have been explained in them on the basis of different types of practitioners.

WHO IS A PRACTITIONER

A person who is ready to lead a life of moral purity and spiritual aspiration, which are the first steps in the path of Yoga, is a practitioner. One who has a calm mind, faith in the words of the master and the scriptures, who is moderate in eating and sleeping and who has an intense longing for deliverance from the wheel of births and deaths is a qualified person for Yoga.

An aspirant in the path of Yoga should have certain basic qualities — faith, cheerfulness, courage, patience, purity, lack of despondence of mind, perseverance, sincerity, dispassion, serenity, self-restraint, non-violence, truthfulness, and non-covetousness. An austere and simple life is necessary. Self-control is the foundation of Yoga, whereas discipline of body and mind is the essence of Yoga. In the practice of Yoga, there is a reversal of the normal outgoing activity of mind, for which steadiness is

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essential and, for that, one has to bring the mind under complete control. Such people are called practitioners.

BENEFITS AND AIM OF YOGA

Life, today, is full of stress and strain, of tension and nervous irritability, of passion and hurry, of love and hate. If man puts into practice a few of the elementary principles of Yoga, he would be far better equipped to cope up with his complex existence. Yoga brings perfection, peace and calmness of mind. One can have restful sleep and increased energy, vigour, vitality, longevity and a good health. You can have success in every walk of life. It infuses new strength, confidence and self-reliance. It brings the emotions under control and increases your power of concentration at work. It leads the way from ignorance to wisdom, from disharmony to harmony, from weakness to strength, from wants to contentment, from limitation to infinitude, from diversity to unity, from imperfection to perfection, from hatred to divine love, from misunderstanding to proper understanding. It transforms one's life in such a way that all that is bad is removed; lust for power, material greed, sensual excitement, passion for wealth, selfishness, anger and all animal-natures are removed.

Constant and steady practise of Yoga with sincere devotion leads gradually towards spirituality, because the senses have to be thoroughly subjugated, divine virtues have to be cultivated and evil qualities eradicated and mind, too, should be controlled well. These are the basic aims of Yoga.

The final aim of Yoga is the experience of union of the (*jīvātmā*) soul with (*paramātmā*) the Supreme. Due to the intoxicating effect of (*Māyā*) worldly delusion, man has become oblivious of his Real Self and when he is subjected to the purifying "fire" of Yoga, he is freed of bodily impurities and inner conflicts and experiences the true form of the Soul.

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tadā draṣṭuḥ svarūpai-avasthānaṁ
— Yoga-Sūtra, **1/2**

In that state, the practitioner resides in and experiences his own self, i.e., Supreme Absolute Bliss.

The soul resides in a physical form, which is a slave to so many (*saṁskāras*) impressions and tendencies. But once the physical body is purified through Yoga it becomes free of the effect of disease, old age and death and capable of experiencing oneness with the Supreme Soul.

na tasya rogo na jarā na mṛtyuḥ ।
prāptasya yogāgnimayam śarīram ॥

A person who has attained a body, purified by yogic fire, will have no disease, no old age and no forget-fulness.

Here, *mṛtyu* does not mean death. Rather, it has the meaning as hinted in *Mahābhārata* —

mṛtyuratyantavismṛtiḥ

Forgetting about something or oneself is (*mṛtyu*) death. In other words, (*mṛtyu*) death is becoming oblivious of the true basis of life, i.e., the Soul.

pramādo vai mṛtyuḥ **(*sanat kumārāḥ*)**

Self-forgetfulness is death.

This is why, in the *Gītā,* after having listened to the discourse of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna says —

naṣṭo mohaḥ smṛtirlabdhā ।
— Gītā, **18/73**

Forgetfulness is destroyed and I have regained memory.

Rebirth is like waking up from sleep. To continue to be aware of

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the previous birth even in the next birth is called (*nā mṛtyu*) immortality. The text *Suśruta-Saṁhitā* describes this as follows:

bhāvinaḥ pūrvadaihaiṣu santatam śāstra-buddhayaḥ ।
bhavanti sattvabhūyiṣṭhāḥ pūrva-jātismarā narāḥ ॥

A *yogī* has the knowledge of (*karmas*) actions of his past life and the (*sādhanās*) spiritual practices that he had accomplished then, due to his continuous study and practise of the scriptures. Surely, he will have a pure intellect and memory of all his past births. He is guided by them in the present life and, thus, acheives totality. In this very context it is said —

tatra tam buddhi-saṁyogam labhate paurvadaihikaṁ ।
yatate ca tato bhūyaḥ sansiddhau kurunandana ॥
pūrvābhyāsena tenaiva hṛyate hyavaśo'pi saḥ ।
— *Gītā*, 6/43-44

There (in rebirth), his intellect recalls (links itself with) the knowledge acquired in the previous births and puts more effort than before for perfection. By that very former practise, he is helplessly and unwillingly or forcibly taken towards the goal, i.e., perfection.

From all these authentic scriptural verses, it is clear that Yoga is not just a set of exercises for keeping the body healthy and disease-free, rather it is also a means of acheiving freedom from the limitations of the mundane world, within and without.

But still to attain liberation a strong-sturdy psychic body is also essential with a disease free physical body. For, a very famous saying goes thus —

śarīramādyam khalu dharmasādhanam ॥

This physical Body is the primary means for all spiritual practices.

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According to this verse, without a healthy and disease free physical body, it is impossible to attain spiritual freedom. This is why the yogic system has been designed in such a manner that one could attain physical fitness and spiritual progress, at the same time. On the basis of their experiences, the *ṛṣi*s have gifted the *āsana*s or yogic postures for physical fitness and breathing practices (*prāṇāyāma*) for longevity to mankind. All these have a scientific basis.

Through a strong will-power, one could practise these. Yoga brings peace and joy in life and, at the same time, it opens up the path to totality and spiritual emancipation. Yoga, besides teaching how to lead life in a beautiful and organized manner, also helps one develop a strong personality.

The aim of *haṭha-yoga* is to make the bones flexible, the muscles supple, the blood circulation perfect and ensure proper functioning of the various glands so that all body functions could go on smoothly and unhindered. *Prāṇāyāma*, i.e., breathing practices aims at making the body as well as the mind healthy. Through it, one becomes free of tension and capable of accomplishing work with concentration.

Hence, if your aim is to make the physical body healthy and well built, gain the capability of remaining unperturbed and balanced in adverse situations, become impartial, simple and hard working in life, make your existence joyous, peaceful and contented, lead a highly moral life even in adverse conditions, keep the mind and soul healthy, live a life dedicated to service and high principles and realize and experience the mysteries of the universe and the Soul, then, you should surely start to gain the knowledge of Yoga from some realized master (*guru*) and practise it under his guidance.

There are four categories of evolving human beings in this world. First, those who believe in *karma*, i.e., action and who are endowed with physical energy. Second, believe in devotion to the

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Lord and, hence, are endowed with softer feelings and emotions. Third, are those who practise (*dhyāna*) meditation and are linked to the energy of the Soul. The last category comprises people who are deep thinkers and, hence, their faculties of thought are much developed. Thus, matching with these four categories of spiritual practitioners, there are four paths prescribed by the *ṛṣis* — *karma-yoga* (Yoga of action), *bhakti-yoga* (Yoga of devotion), *rāja-yoga* (Yoga of spiritual discipline) and *jñāna-yoga* (Yoga of knowledge).

The present work is not only dedicated to postures (*āsana*) and breathing practices (*prāṇāyāma*) — two of the eight-fold path, called *Aṣṭāṅga Yoga*, prescribed in *rāja-yoga* by Patañjali but deals Yoga in its totality. The text has fifteen main chapters which appear in the major three sections of the book. The first section relates to purification of the body, the second to purifi-cation of mind and the third pertains to knowledge of subtle elements.

The book starts with an introduction to *Aṣṭāṅga Yoga* (Eight-fold Yoga System) and concludes with a section, dedicated to alleviation of ailments through Yoga and the scientific basis of this system. The last section of the book is the epilogue. Thus, the book has five sections.

SYNOPSIS OF THE TEXT

In the Introduction of the book, the views of great *ṛṣis*, like Patañjali and *yogī* Yājñavalkya regarding the eight limb Yoga (*Aṣṭāṅga Yoga*) have been presented in order to introduce the readers to this subject.

The first section focuses on purification of the gross and subtle bodies. In this part, the chapters on anatomy and body purification relate to the physical body and its purification. The chapters on *āsana*s and *prāṇāyāma* are related to the purification of both the gross and the subtle body.

The second part of the book, relating to purification of mind

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and other internal-organs, focuses on dispelling of ignorance and countering inflation of the ego. This part focuses on Fruitless or desireless actions (*niṣkāma karma yoga*), Proper diet (*yuktāhāra*), Introversion (*pratyāhāra*), Fixing mind (*dhāraṇā*) and Meditation (*dhyāna*). But the means prescribed in sections three and four cannot be properly put into practice without the knowledge of the subtle spiritual elements. Thus, the fifth section is dedicated to Science of Spiritual elements (*tattva vijñāna*), which throws light on Para-sympathetic Nervous system (*nāḍīs*), Plexuses or psychic centres (*cakras*) and the dormant energy (*kuṇḍalinī*). In the end is the section relating to treatment of ailments, through Yoga. In it, different Yogic practices have been prescribed for different diseases based on the real life experiences of practioners of this system and also of my master (*guru*), Paramahansa Swami Satyananda Saraswati of Bihar School of Yoga.

It is my sincere hope that mankind, especially the spiritual practitioners, would benefit more from this book. Wishing for the welfare and physical and spiritual progress of all, I dedicate this work to the human society, which epitomises Lord Nārāyaṇa.

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Acknowledgements

I very much thank to all my co-disciples who have encouraged me to write this book, particularly Swami Tanmayananda Saraswati, Swami Ramarajyam Saraswati, Swami Shivapoojananda Saraswati and Swami Animeshananda Saraswati.

I thank Swami Sarveshananda Saraswati and Brahmachari Sandeep for lending a helping hand in proof reading. I thank Swami Atmattvananda Saraswati, Swami Govindananda & Mrs Starin Clarissi for providing photographs of some postures and *kriyā*s. I thank Shri Bharat Jhunjhunwala and the trust Shri Motilal Bhimraj Charitable Trust for helping in the publication of this work.

I finally thank Shri Susheel Mittal of D.K. Printworld for putting a lot of efforts in printing, designing, etc., in a short-period, excellently and effectively.

Makara Saṅkrānti
Saṁvat 2060
Date: 14 Jan. 2004

In the service of Lord
Swami Shantidharmananda Saraswati

Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

Key to Transliteration

अ *a* (b<u>u</u>t)	ङ *ṅa* (si<u>ng</u>)[1]	न *na* (<u>n</u>umb)[4]
आ *ā* (m<u>o</u>m)	च *ca* (<u>ch</u>unk)[2]	प *pa* (s<u>p</u>in)[5]
इ *i* (<u>i</u>t)	छ* *cha* (cat<u>ch h</u>im)[2]	फ* *pha* (loo<u>ph</u>ole)[5]
ई *ī* (b<u>ee</u>t)	ज *ja* (j<u>o</u>hn)[2]	ब *ba* (<u>b</u>in)[5]
उ *u* (p<u>u</u>t)	झ *jha* (hed<u>geh</u>og)[2]	भ *bha* (ab<u>h</u>or)[5]
ऊ *ū* (p<u>oo</u>l)	ञ *ña* (bu<u>n</u>ch)[2]	म *ma* (<u>m</u>uch)[5]
ऋ *ṛ* (r<u>hy</u>thm)	ट *ṭa* (s<u>t</u>art)[3]	य *ya* (<u>y</u>oung)
ए *e* (pla<u>y</u>)	ठ* *ṭha* (ant<u>h</u>ill)[3]	र *ra* (d<u>r</u>ama)
ऐ *ai* (h<u>igh</u>)	ड *ḍa* (<u>d</u>art)[3]	ल *la* (<u>l</u>uck)
ओ *o* (t<u>oe</u>)	ढ* *ḍha* (go<u>dh</u>ead)[3]	व *va* (<u>v</u>ile)
औ *au* (l<u>ou</u>d)	ण *ṇa* (u<u>n</u>der)[3]	श *śa* (<u>sh</u>ove)
क *ka* (s<u>k</u>ate)[1]	त *ta* (pa<u>th</u>)[4]	ष *ṣa* (bu<u>sh</u>el)
ख* *kha* (blo<u>kh</u>ead)[1]	थ *tha* (<u>th</u>under)[4]	स *sa* (<u>s</u>o)
ग *ga* (g<u>a</u>te)[1]	द *da* (<u>th</u>at)[4]	ह *ha* (<u>h</u>um)
घ *gha* (log<u>h</u>ut)[1]	ध* *dha* (brea<u>th</u>e)[4]	

ं *ṁ anusvāra* (nasalisation of preceding vowel)

: *ḥ visarga* (aspiration of preceding vowel)

* No exact English equivalents for these letters.

[1] guttural [2] palatal [3] lingual [4] dental
[5] labial

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Aṣṭāṅga Yoga
An Introduction

THE subject of *aṣṭāṅga yoga* has been dealt with in great detail in several Upaniṣads, Smṛtis like *Yogī Yājñavalkya-Saṁhitā* and the text *Yoga-Sūtra* written by *maharṣi* Patañjali. *Aṣṭāṅga yoga* has eight steps namely *yama, niyama, āsana, prāṇāyāma, pratyāhāra, dhāraṇā, dhyāna* and *samādhi*.

Among these, the first four form the group of *bahiraṅga sādhanā*, (external practices), and the rest four *aṅtaraṅga sādhanā* (internal practices). Experts have enumerated the following benefits of these eight. *Yama* and *niyama* lead to moral strengthening, *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma* lead to physical perfection, *pratyāhāra* and *dhāraṇā* lead to strengthening of the mind, *dhyāna* leads to spiritual progress and *samādhi* leads to self-realization.

According to *maharṣi* Patañjali, practising *yama* helps a person protect himself from evil and contribute, in a positive manner, to the society. *Niyama* helps one to lead a moral life through good actions. *Āsana* practice helps one to keep the physical body healthy and robust. Through practice of *prāṇāyāma*, the negative thoughts can be erased and the mind made peaceful and balanced, so that its powers could be used in a positive manner. Through the practice of *pratyāhāra*, the senses along with the mind is withdrawn from worldly objects and directed inwards so that one could focus on particular subjects or objects of his like for spiritual development. By practice of *dhāraṇā*, one concentrates on a particular point and tries to go deep within. Through *dhyāna*, the mind is made

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pure and one gains the capacity to achieve what one wants. *Samādhi* makes one capable of becoming totally engrossed in one's work, yet, still remain conscious so as to progress on the path, that leads to true joy.

Thus, *aṣṭāṅga yoga* makes the social and personal life of a person beautiful; the body, senses and mind pure and helps him attain spiritual totality.

YAMA (EXTERNAL DISCIPLINE)

According to *maharṣi* Patañjali —

ahiṁsā satyāsteya brahmacarya-aparigrahāḥ yamāḥ ।

— *YS*, 2/30

According to this aphorism, *yama* has five sub divisions — *ahiṁsā, satya, astaiya, brahmacarya* and *aparigraha.*

In *Yogī Yājñavalkya-Saṁhitā* it is said —

yamaśca niyamaśca daśadhā suprakīrtitāḥ ।

— *YYS*, 1/47

According to this verse *yama* and *niyama*, each, have ten sub-divisions.

The ten subdivisions of *yama* are —

ahiṁsā satyam-asteyam brahmacarya dayārjavam ।
śama dhṛtir-mitāhāraḥ saucam tvetai yamā daśa ॥

— 1/50

(i) Non-violence, through mind, speech and body and the feeling of not hurting any living being, is called non-violence (*ahiṁsā*).

(ii) Just relating the true facts, as seen, heard or as they occurred, is not truth (*satya*). Truth means saying things for the benefit of all. Hence, even speaking a lie for righteous

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ends, for preserving the respect of elders, is truth according to the ancient texts (*śāstras*). And the truth (as usually thought of), that is against righteousness or one that aims at harming others, is a lie.

(iii) Non-lustrous (*asteya*) means not to crave for the wealth of others or not to steal.

(iv) Celibacy (*brahmacarya*) means to be free of the desire of having sex through body, mind and speech, i.e., not performing sex physically and neither thinking nor talking about it.

(v) *Dayā* (kindness) means to be kind towards all beings.

(vi) *Ārjavam* (simplicity) means to keep the body, speech and mind free from over-indulgence and over-abstinence in all prescribed and prohibited deeds.

(vii) *Śama* (peacefulness) means to have a balanced view in favourable as well as unfavourable circumstances.

(viii) *Dhṛti* (patience) means being unmoved or unaffected by profit or loss.

(ix) *Mitāhāra* (balanced diet) means less or limited food. According to the *śāstras* (ancient holy texts), *saṁnyāsīs* (monks), *munīs* (thinkers) and *brahmacārīs* (celebate), as they are engrossed in *tapa* (spiritual penance) they should have eight morsels of food. Those living in the forest for *tapa* should have 16 morsels and a family man (householder) should have 32 morsels. A *brahmacārī*, engaged in service, should eat food as much as he needs.

(x) Purification is called *śauca* (purity). It is of two types — internal and external. Having a bath and cleaning the body is external purification. Making the mind and thoughts pure through gain of spiritual and true knowledge from father, mother, father-in-law, maternal uncle, elders and teachers or masters is called internal purification.

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Another type of *yama*, as expounded by Patañjali, is *aparigraha* (non-preservation or non-accumulation).

To collect or use, only those things which are extremely necessary for the near future to preserve the body is called *aparigraha*. Accumulation of useless things or those more than necessity is called *parigraha* (greediness).

NIYAMA (INTERNAL DISCIPLINE OR INJUNCTION)

Maharṣi Patañjali has said —

śauca-santoṣa-tapaḥ svādhyāyeśvarapraṇīdhānāni niyamāḥ । — *YS*, 2/32

According to this aphorism, *niyama*s are of five types. The great *yogī* Yājñavalkya, has said, in his work, *Yogī Yājñavalakya-Saṁhitā* —

tapaḥ santoṣmāstikyam dānamīśvarapūjanam ।
siddhāntaśravaṇam caiva hrīrmatiśca japo vratam ॥
— *YYS*, 2/9

According to this verse, *niyama* is divided into ten subdivisions:

(i) Physical austerities are done through scriptural injunctions like *cāndrāyaṇa*. A religious penance which is regulated by the movement of the moon and *pañcāgni* (five sacred Vedic fires), maintained by every householder, namely — 1. *dakṣināgni* (southern fire), 2. *gārhapatyāgni* (householder's fire), 3. *āhavanīyāgni* (central fire), 4. *āvasatyāgni* (guest's fire). 5. *sabhyāgni* (asscessor's fire), or keeping four fires at four plovers in four directions around oneself and the fifth is the burning sun above is called *tapa* (penance).

(ii) To keep the intellect pure and happy by relinquishing desires and accepting whatever comes of its own accord

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is called *santoṣa* (contentment). This, according to the scriptures, is the best way to perfect bliss.

(iii) To believe firmly in the doctrine of *dharma* (righteousness), and *adharma* (unrighteousness), is called *āstikya* (faith).

(iv) Earning money through justified means, as prescribed by the scriptures and distributing a part of it, happily, amongst the needy, is called *dāna* (donation or charity).

(v) Worship of God or the *guru* (master), according to one's capacity with complete devotion, trust and total surrender, is called *īśvara pūjana*, (devotion to god). This is also called *īśvara praṇidhāna* or dedicating oneself totally to God.

(vi) Listening to the Vedas and its related topics by different classes of men like brāhmaṇas (elites), kṣatriyas (defence) and vaiśyas (business class), from a learned scholar is called *siddhānta śravaṇa*. For women and śūdras (serving class), listening to the Purāṇas (epics) and acting according to it, means *svadharma ācaraṇa* (acting according to one's nature) is called as *siddhānta śravaṇa*.

(vii) To devoid oneself from the lowly deeds of the world, as mentioned in the Vedas, with great aversion for them, is called *hrīḥ* (shamefulness).

(viii) To have total faith in the *vihita karma*s (prescribed deeds) is called *mati* (true intellect).

(ix) Chanting a *mantra* (syllable), given in the Vedas, that has been received from the *guru* (master), according to scriptural injunctions, after relinquishing all deeds that have been condemned in the Vedas, is called *mantra-japa* (chanting). *Japa* can be done in many ways — *likhita* (written), *mānasa* (repetition in the mind), *upāṅśu*

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(whispering to oneself), and *vaikharī* (chanting normally). These are the four most famous types of *japa*. *Mantra japa* should be done only after meditating on its *ṛṣi* (*yogī* who is the seer of the *mantra*), *chanda* (prosody or the metre) and *devatā* (deity to whom *mantra* is dedicated) and after infusing the *mantra* with *bīja* (seed), *śakti* (power), *kīlaka* (lock) and *viniyoga* (application).

(x) To adhere strictly to any form of *niyama* (self-discipline) is called *vrata* (vow). *Vrata* also means to keep fast. *Kāmya* (desired), *naimittika* (temporal), and *nitya* (regular), are its three forms. Vow performed after taking into consideration the following — *tithi* (lunar date), *vāra* (day), *nakṣatra* (asterism), festivals, eclipses or special days is called *naimittika vrata* (occasional or temporal). For fulfilment of one's wish, one performs *kāmya vrata* (desired vow). The daily routine worship of the God, which is free from any kind of wish or desire, is called *nitya vrata* (regular, obligatory). The text *Caturvarga Cinatāmaṇi* gives detailed information about the various aspects of *vrata*s (vows).

The practice of *śaucha*, mentioned by *maharṣi* Patañjali, has been included by *yogī* Yājñavalkya, under *yama* and he has used the term *īśvara pūjana* instead of *īśvara praṇidhāna* in his text. *Svādhyāya* mentioned by Patañjali is referred to as *siddhānta śravaṇa* and *japa* in the commentary of *yogī* Yājñavalkya.

ĀSANA (POSTURES)

Maharṣi Patañjali has said —

sthirasukham āsanam — ***YS*, 2/46**

A still and comfortable state of physical body is called posture.

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This aphorism defines *āsana*. *Āsana*s, i.e., yogic postures, are 84 lakh in numbers because of the prevalent 84 lakh species of living beings. But only 84 of them have been considered most important by the *ṛṣi*s. However, *yogī* Yājñavalkya, considers the undergiven eight *āsana*s extremely important for human beings:

svastikam gaumukham padmam,
vīram siṁhāsanam tathā ।
bhadram muktāsanam caiva, mayūrāsanameva ca ॥

—

***YYS*, 3/12**

Svastikāsana (auspicious), *gomukhāsana* (cow's face), *padmāsana* (lotus), *vīrāsana* (hero's) *siṁhāsana* (lions) *bhadrāsana* (gracious), *muktāsana* (liberated) and *mayūrāsana* (peacock).

*Āsana*s bring about physical, mental and spiritual health. Upaniṣads and different texts, like, *Gorakṣa-saṁhitā*, *Gheraṇḍa-Saṁhitā* and *Haṭha-Yoga-Pradīpikā* have discussed, briefly, about the *āsana*s. A detailed discussion would be done, later on, in chapter three of first section. Right now, only the eight divisions of Yoga are being briefly discussed here.

PRĀṆĀYĀMA (BREATHING PRACTICE)

According to *maharṣi* Patañjali —

tasmin sati śvāsapraśvāsayorgativicedaḥ prāṇāyāmaḥ ।
— YS, 2/49

According to this aphorism, combination of the three steps, i.e., *śvāsa* (*pūraka*) or inḥalation, *praśvāsa* (*recaka*) or exhalation and *kumbhaka* or holding of the inhaled air and/or exhaled air (i.e., internal and/or external retention) in the lungs for some time is called *prāṇāyāma*. This aphorism tells about holding the *prāṇa* (vital energy) of the body in a static state through correct and

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regular performance of *pūraka, kumbhaka* and *recaka*. Similar description of this practice has been given in *Yogī Yājñavalkya-Saṁhitā* and other scriptures. A detailed discussion about it would be dealt with in chapter four of first section.

PRATYĀHĀRA (INTROVERSION)

According to *maharṣi* Patañjali's *Yoga-Sūtra* —

svaviṣayāsamprayoge cittasya svarūpānukāreva-indriyāṇām pratyāhāraḥ । — *YS*, 2/54

Withdrawal of the senses from all worldly desires and temptations and keeping them fixed in the pure nature of *citta* or mind is called *pratyāhāra*. But it cannot be easily done, that's why *yogī* Yājñavalkya, has said —

indriyāṇām vicaratām, viṣayeṣu svabhāvataḥ ।
balādāharaṇam teṣām, pratyāhāraḥ sa ucyatai ।
— 7/2

i.e., to control the senses, which are normally directed outwards and turning them inwards forcibly with great determination, is called *pratyāhāra*. To internalize, whatever experiences we gather by performing deeds outside, is called *pratyāhāra*.

Pratyāhāra is just another form of *upāsanā* or worship, mentioned in the Upaniṣads. According to Aśvinī Kumāras, the medical advisors of the demi-gods, to hold and focus the vital air or breath in the 28 strategic points of the body and, then, directing it and instilling it in the heart is called *pratyāhāra*. These strategic points are — toes of the feet, heels, the space between heel and leg calf, leg calf, knees, thighs, *mūlādhāra cakra*, sex-organ, navel, heart, throat, roof of mouth, nose, eyes, eyebrow centre, forehead and brain. A detailed discussion would come in the second section of this book.

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DHĀRAṆĀ (FIXATION)

Maharṣi Patañjali has defined *dhāraṇā*, thus —

deśabandhaścittasya dhāraṇā **— 3/1**

Complete absorption of the mind in any auspicious worldly object, which helps in concentration and lessen distraction or on master or *oṁ*, or on oneself is called *dhāraṇā*.

But, according to *yogī* Yājñavalkya, when interiorization of all the senses has been achieved through continuous practice of *aṣṭāṅga yoga*, then, *dhāraṇā* means concentrating on the self only. That's why, he says —

asmin brahmapure gārgī, yadidam hṛdyāmbujam
tasminnevantarākāśe, yadābāhyākāśe dhāraṇām
— *YYS*, 8/3

i.e., in the middle of the body is situated the *hṛdaya kamala*, the heart, lotus, which is the centre of the interior space, known as pure consciousness. To establish the outer space (extrovert) consciousness in this interior consciousness is called *dhāraṇā*.

Similar opinion has been upheld by the texts, *Chāndogyopaniṣad* and *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*. After establishing the five deities, pertaining to the five elements in the five parts of the body, the above given condition can be achieved. Hence, *dhāraṇā* has been divided into five parts. A special detailed discussion about it comes in the second section of the book, later.

DHYĀNA (MEDITATION)

According to *maharṣi* Patañjali —

tatra pratyayaikatānatā dhyānam । **— YS, 3/2**

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The continuous flow of consciousness, unbroken like a stream of oil, towards a fixed internal auspicious object of *dhāraṇā* i.e., soul is called *dhyāna*.

However, *yogī* Yājñavalkya says —

dhyānamātmasvarūpasya vedanam manasā khalu
saguṇam nirguṇam tacca saguṇam bahuśaḥ smṛtam ।
— *YYS*, 1/2

To know or realize the Self, through the mind's concentration in the self's originality, is called *dhyāna*. To achieve this, there are certain steps. First, one concentrates on some solid form. This is called *saguṇa dhyāna* (objective meditation) and it can have various forms. Then, one concentrates on the formless. This is called *nirguṇa dhyāna* (subjective meditation).

Details can be seen in the second section of the book.

SAMĀDHI (ENGROSSMENT)

Maharṣi Patañjali has said —

tadaivārthamātranirbhāsam svarūpa śūnyamiva
samādhiḥ ।
— 3/3

When the meditator, the object on which one meditates and the process of meditation — all these three — the trinity does not remain three separate entities but becomes one, that stage is called *samādhi*.

But *yogī* Yājñavalkya says —

samādhiḥ samatāvasthā jīvasya paramātmanoḥ ।
brahmaṇyeva sthitir yā sā samādhiḥ pratyagātmanaḥ ॥
— *YYS*, 10/2

It means that *samādhi* is that balanced state, in which the

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> Soul and the Supreme are experienced as one. In other words, the experience of *advaita* (non-duality) or oneness of the Soul with the Supreme is called *samādhi*.

Although, according to *yogī* Yājñavalkya, *mokṣa* (liberation) and *samādhi* (engrossment), mentioned in the Vedas, are not different states, it is not certain, whether, according to Yājñavalkya, this state is possible through yogic activities or intelligence or the supreme knowledge, which we call *brahma-vidyā* (knowledge of Pure Self). There exists a lot of difference of opinion among the scholars. The readers could themselves decide through the study of Upaniṣads, or by experience, what is the truth.

This was a brief introduction to *aṣṭāṅga yoga* which is but another sub-form of *rāja-yoga*.

After attaining perfection in Yoga, one can enter the world if he is not affected by the unfavourable hostile current of the world. Many persons enter the world before perfection in Yoga to demonstrate their minor powers in the name of working for the upliftment of the world and for fame. They are reduced to a level worse than that of a worldly man. If a *yogī* is not careful and not well established in the preliminary practices of *yama* and *niyama*, he will be unconsciously swept away from his ideal by temptation. He will use his power for relish ends and suffers a hopeless downfall. His intellect and understanding, clouded by non-discrimination, becomes blind, perverted and intoxicated. He is no longer a divine *yogī*. He degrades himself to a black magician or a yogic charlatan. He is a black sheep within the fold of *yogī*'s and is a menace to the society at large.

Many people are attracted to the practice of breath control and other yogic practices, as it is through Yoga that psychic healing, telepathy, thought-transference and other great powers are obtained. But one should stop here. The goal of life is not "healing" and "powers". Therefore, one should utilize such

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powers to attain the goal, liberation. If a practitioner is tempted to attain powers, his further progress is seriously retarded and he will loose the way.

The *yogī*, who is bent upon attaining liberation, must reject psychic powers, whenever they come and attain success. Do not stop spiritual practices, when you get a few glimpses and experiences. Continue the practice until you attain perfection. Examples are not lacking, numerous persons have been ruined. Be careful and be aware of your monkey-mind always.

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Part-1

Purification of Physical Body (Śārīrika Śuddhi Vijñāna)

As stated in the introduction —

śarīramādyam khalu dharma sādhanam ।

In the text, *Bhagavad Gītā*, too, Lord Kṛṣṇa says —

idam śarīram kaunteya kṣetramityabhidhiyate ।

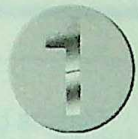
— 13/1

O! Arjuna, This body is said to be like a Field.

The body is like a field in which a person can grow the crop of divine spiritual or supernatural powers through yogic practices. According to these verses, like fertile land, the physical body has to be kept ready to perform worldly and spiritual tasks. The body has to be kept pure and sacred and healthy so that one could attune to the divine through Yoga. This part of the book has been divided into four chapters — **Science of Physical Body** for knowledge of the anatomy of the body, **Science of Body Cleansing** for purification of the physical body, **Science of Postures (Āsanas)** for making the body strong and robust, but, supple and flexible, **Science of Breathing (Prāṇāyāma)** for making the body active, the Vital energy strong, attaining longevity and activating the Psychic centres in the subtle body. In the end of this section, we shall focus on **Science of Gestures and Locks (Mudrā and Bandha Vijñāna)**.

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Science of Physical Body (Śārīrika Vijñāna)

INTRODUCTION

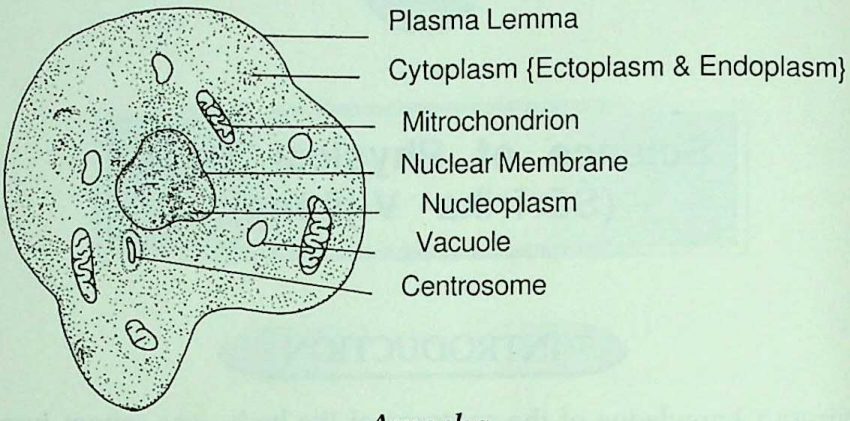
WITHOUT knowledge of the anatomy of the body, one cannot hope to exercise full control over it. Hence, a brief introduction to the human anatomy forms this chapter. The physical body of each human being is divided into three parts. Gross or physical form, subtle form and causal form.

The gross or the physical form is due to the conjugation of seven *dhātus* (basic elements). These are — essence of food, blood, flesh, fat, bones, marrow and *vīrya* (semen). These are different forms of tissues.

Cells form the basic unit of body which are the building blocks of the physical form. Although all cells are different and independent, yet they have many similarities and they function together. According to the scientists, the human body is formed by 600 billion cells. These cells form varied groups which perform different functions. Each moment, many cells die and new ones are born. Exactly how many, it is difficult to ascertain. The main function of these cells is to convert raw food into energy and vital fluids, and to discard the useless part of the food consumed by the body.

A group of cells, performing same function, is called a tissue. Tissues performing various functions get together to form an organ, that has distinct shape and functions in comparison with other organs. Several organs performing a similar function or part

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Amoeba

Major parts of Amoeba

(1) Mitrochondrion
(2) Nuclear Membrane
(3) Nucleoplasm
(4) Vacuole
(5) Centrosome

of a function get together to form an organic system. In the human body there are six major organic systems. These are being briefly described here.

(a) Nervous System
(b) Glandular System
(c) Respiratory System
(d) Blood Circulatory System
(e) Digestive System
(f) Excretory System

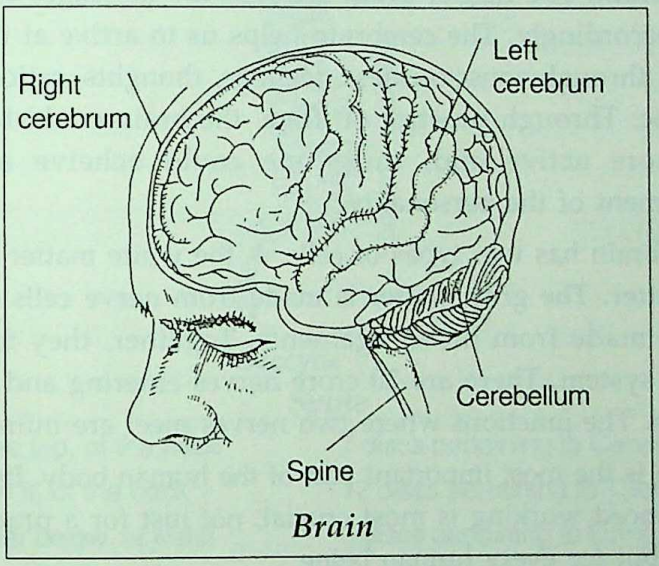
NERVOUS SYSTEM

The nervous system of the human body can be comprehended better by dividing it into four parts namely — brain, spinal column, the autonomic nervous system and the mind.

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BRAIN

The brain has the shape of a walnut with similar grooves but it is bigger. The brain weighs approximately 1.4 kg and has infinite [around $12,00,000^{500}$ (twelve lacs to the power of 500)] white and grey cells. It is situated in the skull. It is a very important part of the body, because it not only controls all other systems but it also receives messages through the sensory organs, analyses them, adds information to the memory, issues orders and stimulates reactions. In a way, it controls all the actions of the body. Recalling



Brain

and forgetting is one of its chief features. Like the heart and the lungs, the brain functions, day and night, ceaselessly. The shape or the size of the brain cannot determine the intelligence lying latent in it. Although it constitutes just one-fifth of the body mass, it needs more than one-fifth of the oxygenated blood pumped by the heart. If it does not get fresh blood for two seconds it can stop functioning. If fresh blood supply is cut off for five minutes death occurs.

The brain has three main parts — higher, middle and lower or frontal, middle and smaller. The lower brain has two parts — left and right hemispheres.

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The right hemisphere of the lower brain controls the right parts of the body while the left hemisphere controls the left parts. It controls the natural involuntary functions of the body like heartbeat-rate, breathing rate, depth of breath, body temperature and coordination of limbs. The higher and middle or the frontal and middle parts together form the cerebrum. The middle brain works like a sensitive switch board. It receives signals from all parts of the body and the various sense-organs. It analyses the various signals and transmits only the important one's to the higher brain. The higher brain receives the messages and then reacts, accordingly. The cerebrum helps us to arrive at the right decision through consciousness, feelings, thoughts, ratiocination and logic. Through practice of Yoga, the brain could be made even more active and, thus, one could acheive a better development of the personality.

The brain has two types of cells — the white matter and the grey matter. The grey matter is made from nerve cells and the white is made from nerve ligaments. Together, they form the nervous system. There are 20 crore nerves entering and leaving the brain. The junctions where two nerves meet are infinite.

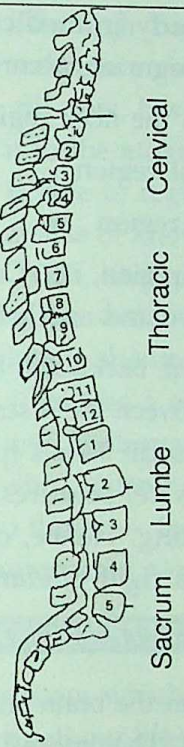
Brain is the most important part of the human body. Its proper and balanced working is most crucial, not just for a practitioner of Yoga but for every human being.

SPINE

A set of bonal structure situated in the back portion of the body is the spinal column. It is the extension of the central nervous system or the brain. Its length is 17 inches or about 45 cm. It extends from the lower part of the brain up to the second vertebra in the waist region. The nerves in the spine are of two types — sensory and motor. Through them the brain controls the entire body.

The spinal column has 33 vertebrae. In between two discs, there is a cushioning tissue that makes it capable of with-standing

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Spine

On the top, of the neck	7 discs pertaining to Cervical
Below it, of the back	12 discs pertaining to Thoracic
Further below, of waist	5 discs pertaining to Lumber
Lowest in, excretory region	2 discs pertaining to Sacral &
(5+4) These two groups are inter-related.	Coccygel

shocks and jerks. It is protected by a three layer cover. In its centre, there is a fluid called spinal fluid. From the 39 joints of the spinal discs, nerves emerge. Some of them, called sensory nerves, convey messages to the brain; while others, called motor nerves, convey commands from the brain to the other parts of the body.

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For convenience of study in medical science, the discs are divided into following categories, according to their functions.

7 Cervical vertebrae in the neck region

12 Thoracic in the chest region

5 Lumber in the waist region

2 Coccyx in the sacral region, i.e., Coccygeal in two divisions (one set of five and another set of four):

When one bends forward, backward, left or right there is direct effect on the tissue layer between the discs and on the basic nerves. Hence, one should not perform *āsana*s (postures) with jerk or by stressing too much. *Āsana*s i.e. postures are performed to make the spine flexible and strong. Hence, one should not perform *āsana*s (postures) without a right guidance.

MIND

The mind is the link between the brain and the senses. Mind being very fickle leads to sorrow. The more it is still, the more is the peace attained. But how can it be made still? For this, at first, one should have basic information about the brain. The brain is gross and so is the physical body. The mind and the senses, on the other hand, are subtle. Hence, it is impossible to operate upon the mind and the senses for a cure. Whenever reception-transmission of thoughts takes place, the senses and the mind come into play. The vital force (*prāṇa*) influences all the three — the physical body, brain and the mind. Hence, through the balance and control of the vital force, in other words, through breathing practices (*prāṇāyāma*), the mind could be made still. It is the mind that experiences emotions and through the nerves it sends out instruction to various parts of the body. The mind and the physical body could fall asleep but not the brain.

According to Yoga, mind has three parts — conscious, unconscious and subconscious. We are able to use only a fraction

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of its three capabilities. Through Yoga, one could increase the level of conscious mind and use more of its latent powers. Mind is so subtle that no one, till now, has been able to know it fully. Some scholars compare it to the atom, believing it to be made of subtle waves. Hence, it is able to register even the extra sensory objects and events. It is capable of knowing everything in the inner as well as outer world. Wish, thought and action are the three outputs of the mind. In the wake state, it remains attracted towards outer objects, while in the dream state (the state between sleep and wake states), it creates a world of its own. But in the state of deep sleep (*suṣupti*) it stops functioning altogether. The question now arises — who controls the vital energy in the state of *suṣupti*? The answer to this is — the fourth part — the nervous system, especially the autonomic nervous system.

AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

It is a special nervous system which always remains conscious. Hence, it keeps a vigil over all our life-related activities and protects us from perils. Most of these activities are autonomic or involuntary. Without using any medium for sending out its instructions it does its work. It does not wait for any instruction. In this system, there are two sub-systems — sensory and motor — which work coordinating each other even though both of them are opposing forces.

The autonomic sensory nervous system prepares the body for outer action by prompting the external organs into action along with the nerves that link a person to the outer world. In complete contrast, the autonomic motor nervous system uses the stored energy in the body to activate the internal and external organs as well as the nerves of the body.

Thus, we see that the nervous system has immense capabilities. But man is only able to use a fraction of these powers. If the various powers of the brain are activated through Yoga, many new nerves could get activated which could help a person to have

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an all round worldly as well as spiritual development. This is why Yoga is called as a system that imparts strength to the nerves.

GLANDULAR SYSTEM

For a practitioner of Yoga along with the knowledge of nervous system it is also important to know about the glandular system. The psychic centres of the *kuṇḍalinī* (the dormant energy) are located in the same spot where important glands are also located. In fact, the psychic centres and the glands are very much related.

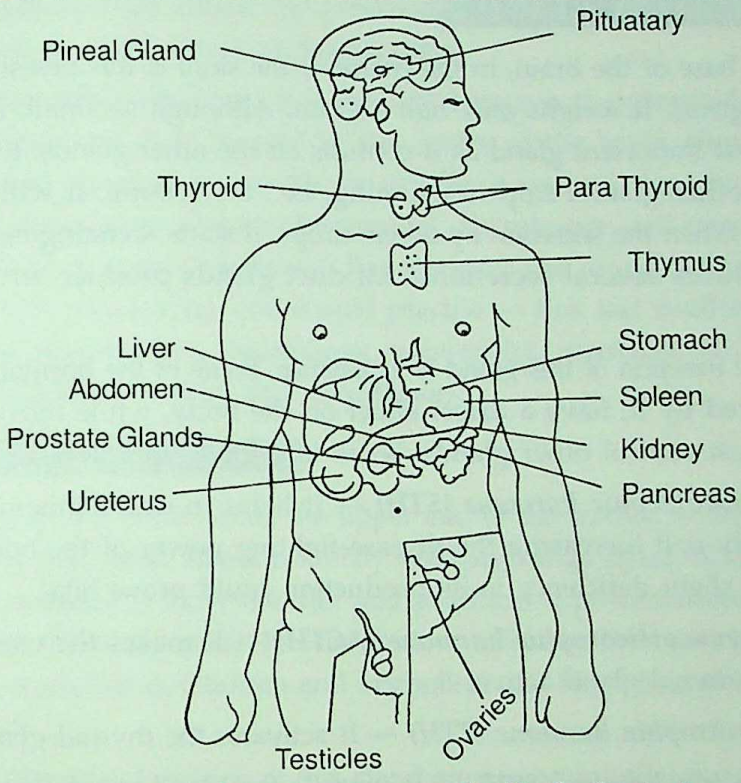
Organs in the body that secrete certain vital fluids are known as glands. These are of two types — ductless glands and duct glands.

The duct glands produce secretion, which is distributed through ducts for keeping the body parts healthy. The secretions of the ductless glands enter the blood stream and are distributed to the various body parts by the blood vessels. Here, we are introducing the reader to the most important duct glands only. The rest of the duct and ductless glands shall be discussed under section — The Digestive System.

The secretions of the duct glands are called hormones. Each gland has two sub-parts — the upper cortex and the medulla. Cortex produces strong fluid called steroids. Till now, we know about 30 steroids each with different functions. These have deep effect on the mental and physical activities. The six main glands along with the psychic centres i.e. *cakras*, to which they are related are as follows:

Pineal gland — *sahasrāra cakra*
Pituitary gland — *ājñā cakra.*
Thyroid and Parathyroid — *viśuddhi cakra.*
Thymus — *anāhata cakra*
Adrenal gland — *maṇipūra cakra*
Solar Plexus — *svādhiṣṭhāna cakra*
Gonads — *mūlādhāra cakra*

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Glanducar system — the Body Sectret

These glands are situated close to the place of psychic centres and are situated near

1. Ājña cakra	→	Pineal & Pituatary Glands
2. Viśuddhi cakra	→	Thyroid & Para thyroid Glands
3. Anāhata cakra	→	Thymus Glands
4. Maṇipūra cakra	→	Adrenal, Liver, Pancreas & Kidneys
5. Svādhiṣṭhāna cakra	→	Testicles & Ovaries
6. Mūlādhāra cakra	→	Gonads

These are formed from cholesterol. All duct glands are in pairs. Hence, if one starts to malfunction the other keeps functioning. Thus, the requirements of the body are always fulfilled. All these glands are interrelated. None is totally independent. Hence, if one gets imbalanced the others also get affected.

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PITUITARY GLAND

At the base of the brain, in the centre of the skull is this pea-sized small gland. It weighs only half a gram. Although so small, it is the most important gland as it controls all the other glands. Even when other glands stop functioning, i.e., are resting, it will be active. When the secretion by others drops, it starts secreting more. It produces several secretions. All duct glands produce strong fluids.

The function of this gland is to balance. Some of the hormones, produced by it, have a direct effect on the body, while most of them just control other glands. Some important secretions are:

(a) *Somatotrophic harmone* (*STH*) — It helps in development of the body and increasing the disease-fighting power of the body. Even a slight deficiency in its production could prove fatal.

(b) *Adrenocorticorophic harmone* (*ACTH*) — It makes the cortex of the adrenal gland active.

(c) *Thyrotrophin harmone* (*TTH*) — It activates the thyroid gland.

(d) *Pituitrin harmone* (*PH*) — It controls the blood circulation in the body.

(e) *Foliate stimulating harmone* (*FSH*) — It keeps all small and large glands of the body functioning.

Thus, we see that this gland helps in all round development of the entire body. It plays an important role in increase of height, keeping kidneys healthy, the sperm and ova healthy and determining level of milk in breasts. For keeping this gland active and toned, one should practice — the second and the eleventh steps of *sūrya namaskāra, praṇāmāsana, śīrṣāsana, sarvāṅgāsana* and meditation.

PINEAL GLAND

Scientists have till now remained unsuccessful in knowing about

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this gland. They accept the presence of this gland but have been unable to know about its functioning.

According to Yoga, it is the link between the physical body and the soul. It is located in the centre of the brain above the pituitary gland in a cave like small hole. It controls the autonomic nervous system. It prevents mental disturbance and keeps the brain in a state of balance. For keeping the gland active and properly functioning, one should practise — first and twelfth steps of *sūrya namaskāra, śaśāṅkāsana, yoga-mudrā, uṣṭrāsana, śīrśāsana, sarvāṅgāsana, trāṭaka* and meditation.

THYROID GLAND

Close to the voice box at the upper end of the trachea is the small gland that looks like a butterfly with its wings open. It absorbs iodine element from the diet and produces a powerful secretion called thyroxin, which has an obvious effect on the basic tissues. It controls the metabolism and catabolism and helps in maintaining youth.

The main functions of this gland are — encouraging the growth of bones, increasing the sensitivity of the nerves, affecting some body parts actively and others passively, affecting the digestive system, helping in production and distribution of energy, producing nerves and brain cells, etc. For its balanced functioning practice — fifth and eighth steps of *sūrya namaskāra, bhujaṅgāsana, matsyāsana, sarvāṅgāsana, cakrāsana,* etc.

PARATHYROID GLAND

These are very small glands. Near the voice box, they are present in a pair on either side of the trachea. They are totally embedded in the thyroid glands. But they are different in structure and function. They encourage building up of bones and control the distribution and level of calcium and phosphorous in the body.

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THYMUS GLAND

This gland is present above the heart, in the centre of the chest, behind the spot where the chest bone and the neck meet. It consists of a pair of glands. In infants, it is larger in size. It is not clear why it is considered a duct gland. It controls development of the body and protects from ailments. As a person grows, the gland gradually shrinks. It prevents the sex-organs from maturing before the age of fourteen. It helps in the proper development of the brain. It helps in production of lymphocytes and in expulsion of toxic fluids and other unwanted substances from the body. For keeping it active, practise sixth step of *sūrya namaskāra, śalabhāsana, uṣṭrāsana, ujjayī prāṇāyāma*, etc.

ADRENAL GLAND

These are a pair of glands, triangular in shape and above each kidney, touching the diaphragm. It produces the maximum secretion. Its secretion is very essential for protection of life. Without it, life is impossible. The cortisome hormone, produced by it, cures more than 100 ailments — right from rheumatism to blood disorder, from cancer to asthma. It increases the metabolism. It shrinks the skin and the blood vessels of internal organs. It also helps develop the muscles and blood vessels of the heart. In emergency situations, it puts the body on a red alert and activates the immune system to deal with the adverse circumstances. It helps to bring about changes in emotions. To keep this gland toned and active, practise the seventh step of *sūrya namaskāra, jānu śirśāsana, paścimottānāsana, mayūrāsana, dhanurāsana, sūryabhedī prāṇāyāma, kapālabhāti prāṇāyāma* and *agnisāra kriyā*.

RESPIRATORY SYSTEM

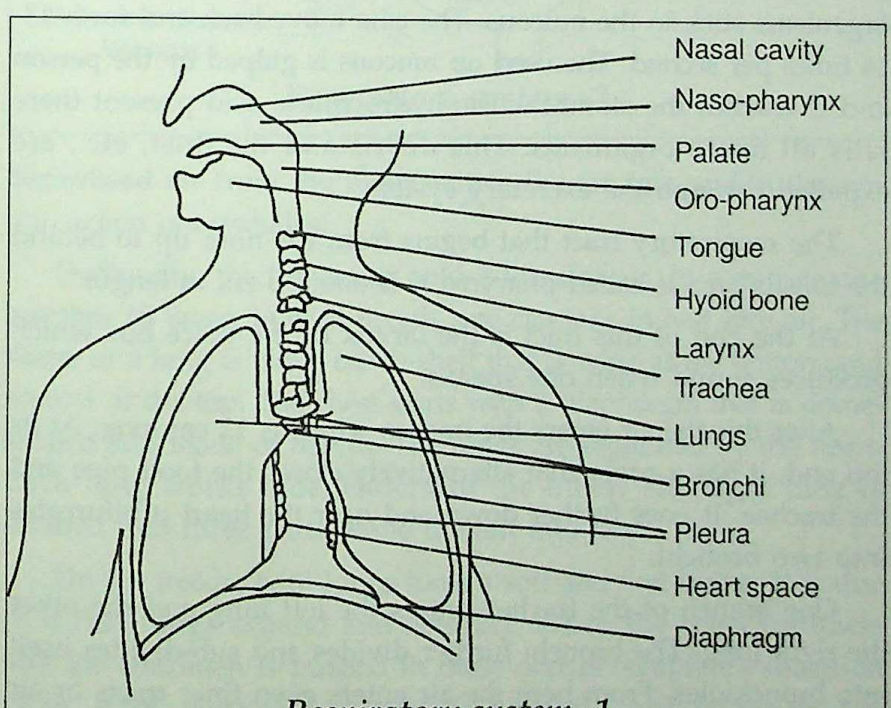
Living organisms cannot stay alive for long without food, water and air. Hence, air, i.e., *prāṇa* (the vital energy) is the very basis of life. The process of inhalation and exhalation goes on

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incessantly from birth to death. Through the respiratory system, all parts of the body receive oxygen and, thus, the cells stay alive.

Through inhalation oxygen is taken in and through exhalation carbondioxide is thrown out. The oxygen of the air, breathed in, is used by the cells to break down food into energy. This process is called oxidation. For inhalation and exhalation of air, a special system is required. This is the respiratory system. This system has six parts:

1. Nose
2. Pharynx
3. Voice box
4. Trachea
5. Bronchi
6. Lungs — (a) Bronchioles, and (b) Alveolus



Respiratory system -1

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Generally, the air is full of dust, smoke and micro-organisms. It can also be dry and cool. It has to be made moist and warm before it enters the lungs. So, for this, there is a proper air purifying system in the body.

The air enters the body through the nostrils. It has small hairs inside, whose ends point outwards. These filter the air inhaled and prevent the dust from entering the lungs. Inside the nose is a bone covered by a thick sponge-like soft and flexible cartilage in which the blood circulation is quite good. It produces mucous which makes the air warm and moist and brings it to a temperature, conducive to the body temperature.

The partially purified air travels from the nose to the trachea and, then, into the lungs. The entire respiratory tract is lined by mucous membrane and hair like structure called *cilia*. There are many mucous membranes from which thin and sticky mucous is produced. Very minute dust particles, smoke particles and micro-organisms stick to the mucous. The cilia move back and forth 13-14 times per second. The used up mucous is gulped by the person and it reaches the stomach. The hydrochloric acid present there kills all micro-organisms. This debris and the dust, etc., are expelled through the excretory system.

The respiratory tract that begins from the nose up to behind the tonsils area is called pharynx. It is about 5 cm in length.

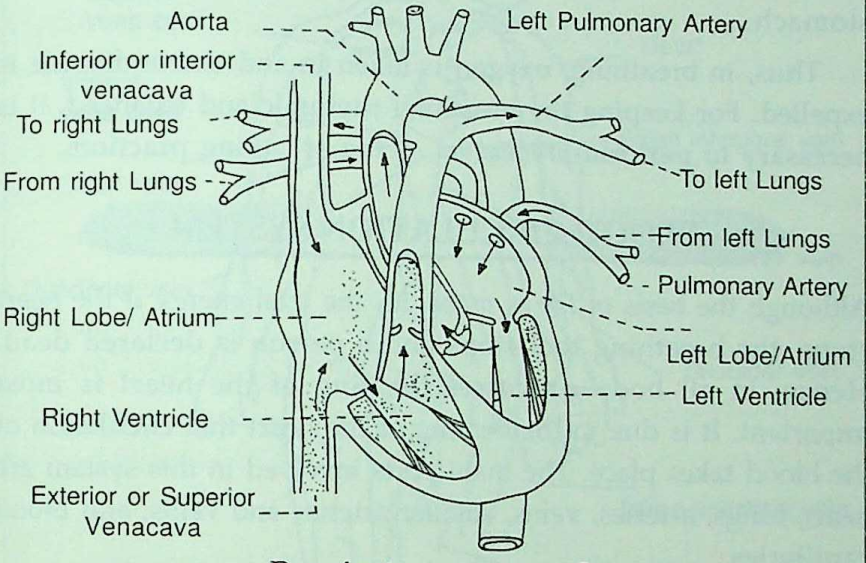
At the end of this tract is the larynx or the voice box which produces sound when one speaks.

After this the air enters the trachea which is 12 cm long. At its top end, it has a cover that alternatively closes the food pipe and the trachea. It goes further down and near the heart it bifurcates into two bronchi.

One branch of the trachea enters the left lung and the other the right lung. The bronchi further divides and sub-divides itself into bronchioles. From here the air enters even finer tracts or air

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sacs or the alveolus. The air sacs resemble bee hives. Each air sac is covered by blood capillaries which are the finest blood vessels in the human body. Through these, oxygen enters the blood and reaches the RBC (red blood cells). Simultaneously, the toxic



Respiratory system -2

deoxidised air from the blood enters the air sacs and is thrown out, when one exhales.

Ordinarily, the lungs can hold 3 litres of air. In a minute one breathes 15 times. In each breath, one can take in half litre air. The shape of a lung is like a conch-shell that is wide at the bottom and narrow at the top. The chest starts with a diaphragm that is dome-shaped and made of nerves. The lungs are separated by the heart. Each lung works independent of the other. The right lung is divided into three parts while the left into two.

On the inside, both lungs have a soft and wet lining. It is due to it that lungs expand and contract. When the chest contracts and the abdomen is pushed in there occurs complete exhalation of air. If still more air is exhaled or expelled forcefully the process

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is called *recaka* i.e. exhalation. When the chest and the abdomen expand and one inhales to the full capacity, it is called *pūraka* i.e. inhalation. *Recaka* and *pūraka* together constitute breathing. This can be done in two ways — one by expanding and contracting the chest and the other by expanding and contracting the stomach.

Thus, in breathing, oxygen is taken in and carbondioxide is expelled. For keeping the breathing rhythmic and balanced, it is necessary to perform *prāṇāyāma* — the breathing practices.

BLOOD CIRCULATION SYSTEM

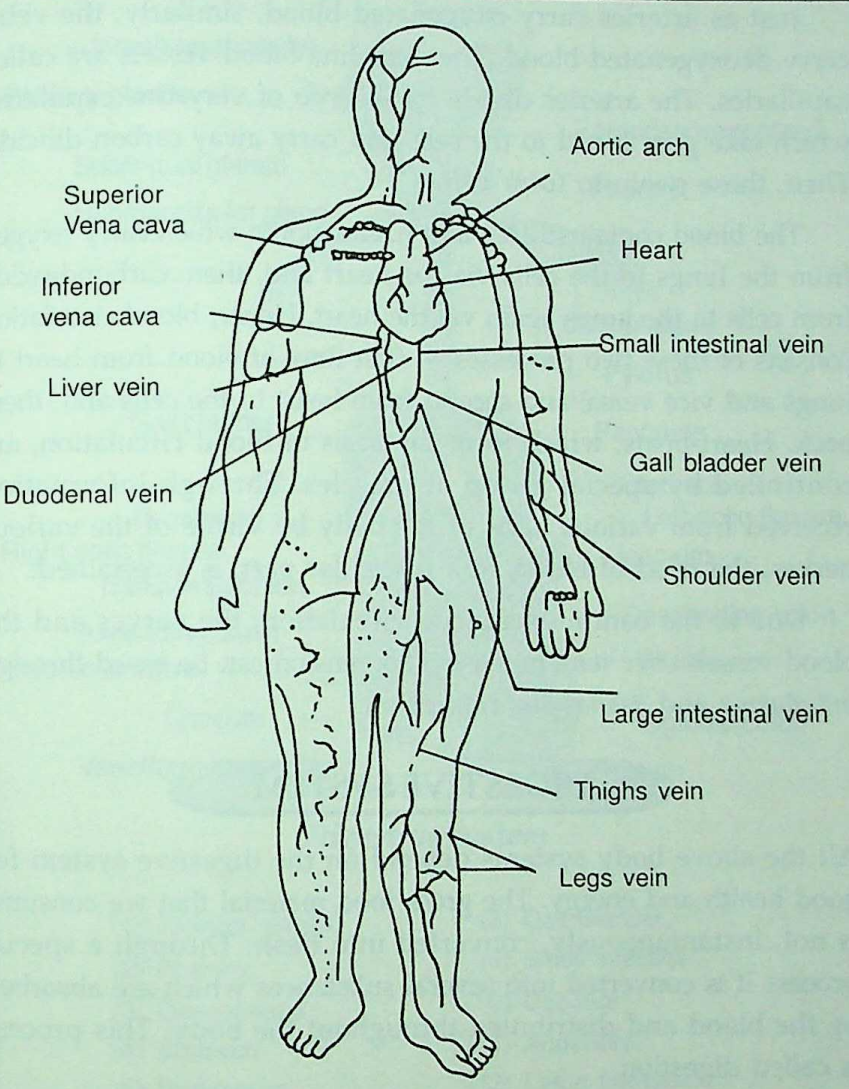
Although the basis of life is *prāṇa*, i.e. the vital energy if the heart stops, the breathing too, stops and a person is declared dead. Hence, in all body processes, beating of the heart is most important. It is due to the beating of the heart that circulation of the blood takes place. The main parts involved in this system are heart, lungs, arteries, veins, smaller arteries and veins, and blood capillaries.

The heart is situated in between both lungs and more towards the left. Daily, it pumps blood through the blood vessels by means of more than one lakh heart beats (1,03,680 per day). It is an amazing pump which keeps pumping blood right from birth to death.

The heart has four chambers. The oxygen carrying blood from the lungs enters the left auricle. From here, it goes into the left ventricle through a valve. When the left ventricle contracts the valve closes. At the same time the valve to the aorta opens and blood enters it and from there goes into other arteries.

The arteries carry oxygenated blood from the heart to the cells. In comparison with other blood vessels, the arteries have longer life span. All arteries are the branches of the aorta. The main branches are heart artery, hepatic artery, mesenteric artery, renal artery, etc.

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Blood circulatory system

In the right auricle and ventricle, deoxygenated blood enters. In other words, having carried oxygen to the cells, the blood now carrying carbon dioxide reaches the right part of the heart. From here, it reaches the lungs where carbondioxide is expelled and oxygen absorbed.

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Just as arteries carry oxygenated blood, similarly, the veins carry deoxygenated blood. The very fine blood vessels are called capillaries. The arteries divide into a web of very fine capillaries which take pure blood to the cells and carry away carbon dioxide. Then, these rejoin to form veins.

The blood contains RBCs and haemoglobin which carry oxygen from the lungs to the cells via the heart and, then, carbondioxide from cells to the lungs again via the heart. Hence, blood circulation consists of these two processes — first flow of blood from heart to lungs and vice versa; and second from heart to the cells and, then, back. Heart-beats, which form the basis of blood circulation, are controlled by special group of muscles. Through information received from various parts of the body by virtue of the various nerves, the need of blood, in a particular part, is ascertained.

Due to the continuous blood circulation, the nerves and the blood vessels ever remain tense. This tension can be eased through *prāṇāyāma* and *āsanas* for relaxation.

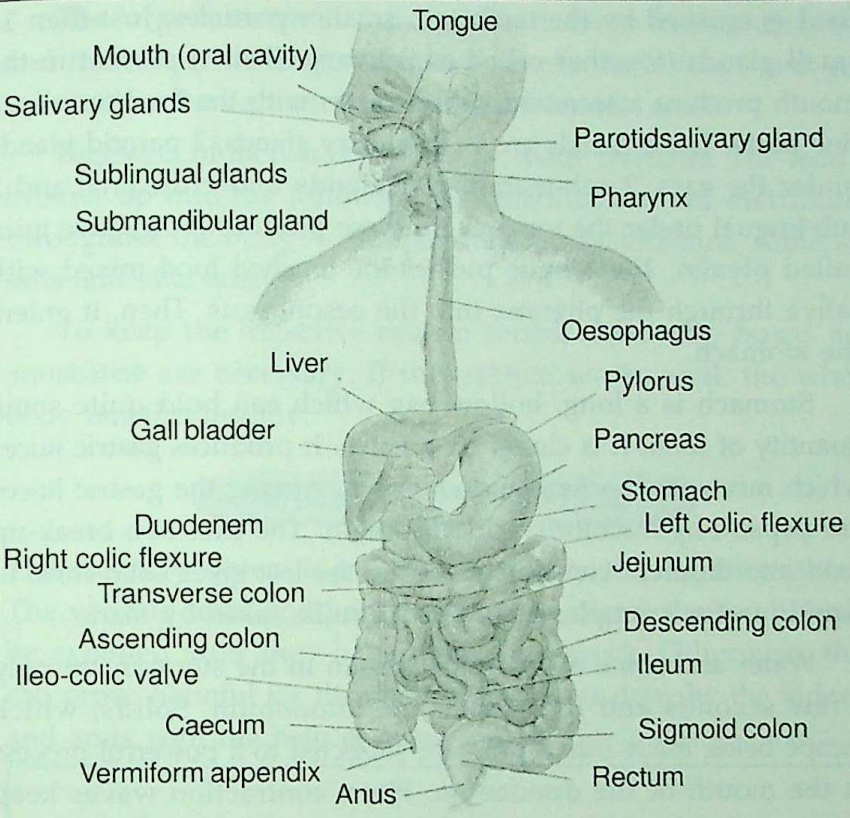
DIGESTIVE SYSTEM

All the above body systems depend on the digestive system for good health and energy. The gross food material that we consume is not, instantaneously, converted into flesh. Through a special process it is converted into several substances which are absorbed by the blood and distributed throughout the body. This process is called digestion.

Here, the alimentary canal comes into play. This canal from the mouth to the anus is nine metres long. This constitutes the digestive system. Its main parts are mouth, salivary glands, pharynx, oesophagus, stomach, duodenum, liver, pancreas, gall bladder, small intestine, large intestine, rectum and anus.

As soon as the food enters the mouth, digestion starts. The first step in digestion is chewing or mastication, in which the

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Digestive system

(1) Salivary glands
(2) Pharynx
(3) Oesophagus
(4) Stomach
(5) Duodenum
(6) Liver
(7) Pancreas
(8) Gall Bladder
(9) Small Intestine
(10) Caecum
(11) Appendix
(12) Large Intestine
(13) Rectum
(14) Anus

Salivary Glands

6 glands in mouth (Salivary Glands)
2 below and in front of ears (Parotid Glands)
2 below the gums (Submandibular)
2 below the tongue (Sublingual)

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food is crushed by the teeth into smaller particles. Just then 12 small glands (together called as Salivary Glands) present in the mouth produce a secretion, which mixes with the food to form a fine paste. These glands are — 2 salivary glands, 2 parotid glands under the ears, 2 sub-mandibular glands under the jaw, and 2 sub-lingual under the tongue. All these produce a digestive juice called ptyalin. The tongue pushes the crushed food mixed with saliva through the pharynx into the oesophagus. Then, it enters the stomach.

Stomach is a long, hollow bag which can hold quite some quantity of food. It is closed by a valve. It produces gastric juices which mix with the food and churns it. Among the gastric juices are pepsin, hydrochloric acid and regin. The first two break-up food into different constituents, while the last gives solid form to liquids — for example, it curdles the milk, taken by man.

Water and some other fluids remain in the stomach for only a few seconds and then reach the duodenum. Solids, which escape being made into a pulp are subjected to a powerful process at the mouth of the duodenum. Here, contraction waves keep grinding food continuously and, from time to time, the door to the duodenum opens up and the crushed food enters it. At this place, the secretions of stomach, liver, pancreas and colon glands namely, pancreatic juices and bile, mix with the food. The most important and powerful amongst these is the pepsin. The bile, produced in the liver, is stored in the gall bladder, where it gains power. After that, the fortified bile juice enters the duodenum.

The small intestine is about 20 ft long. Its walls have very small glands which produce several juices. These make digestion easier. The inner layer of the small intestine is silky and it has finger like small projections called villi. These are rich with small blood capillaries which absorb digested food and distribute it throughout the body. At the end of the small intestine is an opening through which undigested and unabsorbed, rejected material enters the large intestine.

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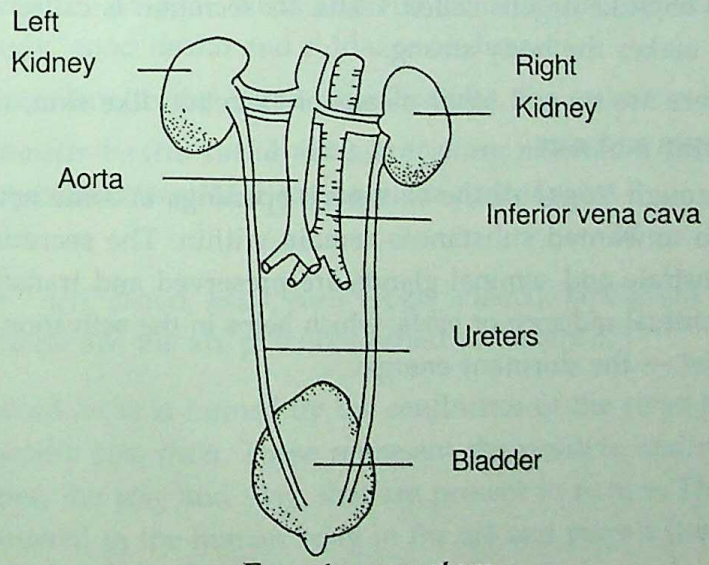
The large intestine is 5 ft long. In it, more food is absorbed and the rest of the material goes towards the kidneys and gets collected in the rectum. It is excreted from the anus.

Digestion of food is completed in about 17-18 hrs. The food is broken up into the following six constituents and distributed throughout the body — carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, minerals, salts and vital energy.

To keep the digestive system toned, *ṣaṭkarmas*, *āsanas* and *prāṇāyāma* are necessary. If this system works well, the whole body remains healthy.

EXCRETORY SYSTEM

The excretory system is just as important as the digestive system. The various acids and juices secreted to digest the food should be expelled after they have done their work. Otherwise, they can prove harmful for the body. Excretion is done by the kidneys and anus with the help of some glands.



Excretory system

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KIDNEYS

These are located above the abdomen and below the diaphragm — one on either side. Daily, they filter the entire blood in the body, twice. They filter out the uric acid from the blood while the necessary elements like proteins, vitamins, amino acids, glucose and harmones are returned to the blood. Kidneys prevent the blood from getting either too acidic or too alkalic. Kidneys also help in production of RBCs and balancing the level of water in the body. In this process the kidneys are assisted by the ureters and urinary bladder.

PROSTRATE GLANDS

These are located under the urinary bladder. This gland is made of cells and involuntary muscles. Its secretion provides lubrication to the sperm. It is a very important gland. Its imbalance makes the body weak and unvirile.

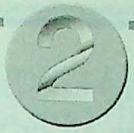
SEMINAL GLANDS

These are present in pairs behind the urinary bladder in the form of two bag-like organs called Testis. Its secretion is called semen which makes the body strong.

There are several other means of excretion like skin, mouth, nose, eyes and ears.

Through Yoga, all the excretory openings become active so that no unwanted substances remain within. The secretions of the prostrate and seminal glands are preserved and transformed into spiritual radiance or *ojhā*s, which helps in the activation of the *kuṇḍalinī* — the dormant energy.

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Science of Body Cleansing (Ṣaṭkarma Vijñāna)

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we focus on the cleansing of the physical body or the cleansing practices. According to *maharṣi* Patañjali, the first sub-part of *niyama* (the second part of *aṣṭāṅga yoga*), is *śauca*. We have already discussed, in brief, about inner and outer cleansing. But among the two, outer cleansing must come before inner cleansing. For outer cleansing, everyone does have a bath daily. Still, for the cleansing of the various systems of the body, it is necessary to resort to *ṣaṭkarma*s (the six cleansing processes) along with *āsana*s and *prāṇāyāma*. *Ṣaṭkarma*s aim at striking a balance between the phlegm, wind and bile elements for purification of the body, good health and riddance of diseases.

According to the *Haṭha-Yoga-Pradīpikā*, the *ṣaṭkarma*s are —

dhautir-bastis-tathā netis-trāṭakam naulikam tathā ।
kapālabhātiścaītāni ṣaṭ karmāṇi pracakṣatai ॥

— 22

i.e., *neti*, *dhauti*, *nauli*, *basti* (yogic enema), *kapālabhāti* and *trāṭaka* are the six practices called as *ṣaṭkarma*.

The word *haṭha* is formed by the confluence of the *sūrya bīja*, *haṁ* and *candra bīja*, *ṭhaṁ*. These represent the positive and negative energies, the *ying* and *yāng*, that are present in nature. These two are situated in the human body in the *iḍā* and *piṅgalā* (two of the *kuṇḍalinī* channels), that signify mental and physical energies,

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respectively. The left and right nostrils, respectively, supply the *prāṇa vāyu* or life sustaining air or vital force to these two. To maintain a balance between these two is known as *haṭha yoga*. Due to this balance, the *prāṇa* or vital air starts to flow into *suṣumnā*, the third channel of the *kuṇḍalinī*. It is from this juncture that human being progresses towards spiritual evolution and attain the Super consciousness. This is the real aim of all the branches of Yoga.

In this chapter we shall delve upon the six cleansing processes or the *ṣaṭkarma*s, namely *neti, dhauti, nauli, basti* (yogic enema), *kapālbhāti* and *trāṭaka*.

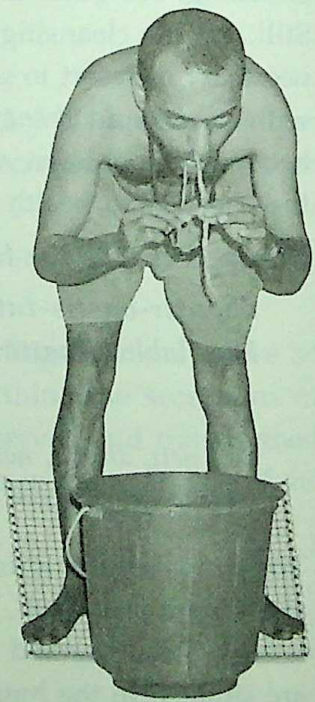
NETI (NASAL CLEANING)

Neti is the process of cleansing of the nasal passages. It can be done through several different techniques: *jala neti, sūtra neti, catheter* (rubber) *neti,* oil/*ghī* (clarified butter) *neti, dugdha neti, amaroli neti,* etc.

SŪTRA NETI (THREAD NETI)

Preparation — *Sūtra* means thread or a catheter. Traditionally, a thread half arm long, made stiff by waxing, is used. But, nowadays, readymade threads are available in the market. Besides very thin rubber tube called catheter is also available easily and can be used alternatively. Catheter sizes 4 to 6 are best for the purpose.

Practice — For use, the thread must be washed properly and kept soaked in water. Then, one should squat on the haunches, i.e., sit on your feet or stand as



Sūtra neti (thread neti)

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shown in the picture. Hold one end of the thread with the index finger and thumb of the right hand. Then see which nasal passage is working at the moment. With the mouth open insert the end into that very nasal passage along the wall and push till it emerges at the back of the mouth. With the left hand, pull that end out of the mouth. Then, holding each end with one hand move the thread to and fro, i.e., pull it from the mouth end and then the nose end. Do this slowly. Repeat 10-25 times. Do the same for the other nostril. Be very slow and careful, while inserting and removing the thread. Do not rush, pull or push too hard.

Benefits All nerves of the throat and the brain are cleansed. It eliminates most of the problems relating to the eyes, nose and throat. The practice also removes mucous and impurities accumulated in the nasal passage due to pollution and toxious gases. It also removes fleshy outgrowth in the nasal tracts. Several problems like deafness, tonsillitis, sinusitis, diptheria, asthma, migraine, stuffed nose, cold, allergies, mumps and cataract are remedied by this practice. It also makes the eye-sight better. As the nasal passages are cleaned thoroughly the breathing is more balanced and, as a result, all systems of the body work better.

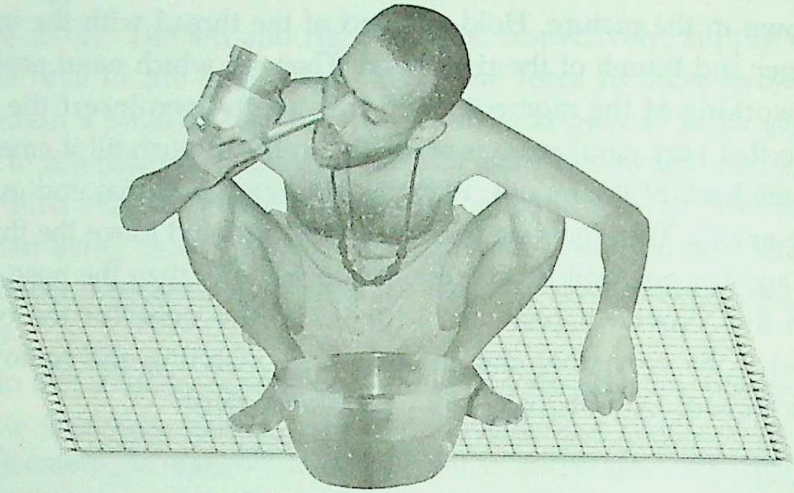
JALA NETI (WATER NETI)

Once the mucous and filth are loosened, they are washed out of the nasal passages by *jala neti*.

Preparation — For this, one needs a special pot, called *neti loṭā* or *neti* pot. It can be made of copper, brass, steel or plastic (modern version). In the summers, one must use cold water and, in winters, lukewarm water, or water, that is at the same temperature as the blood in the body. It should be comfortable when used and not too hot. Mix one tea spoon salt in half litre water and then strain the water.

Practice — Take water in the *neti* pot and squat on the haunches,

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Jala neti (water neti)

i.e., sit on your feet. See which nasal passage is working at the moment. Then, slightly insert the nozzle into that nostril. Let the elbow of the hand holding the pot rest on that side's knee and then slightly tilt the head on the opposite side supporting it with the palm of the other hand, if necessary. Start breathing through the mouth and let the water flow into the nostril. The water shall itself flow out of the other nostril. One need not worry or do anything for this. Then repeat for the other nostril.

Precautions — Never breathe through the nose, when doing *jala neti*. Breathe through the mouth. When the practice has been done on both nasal passages, breathe deep and slow through the mouth and then closing the mouth exhale through the nose. Do this five to six times. One can repeat this, two to three times more, as required.

Not a drop of water should be left in the nostrils. To ensure this bring the feet close (don't join, but keep a feet apart) and stand straight. Lock both hands at the back. Then raise the hands and bend forwards from the waist. Keep the head raised. Remain in this position for about half a minute and inhale fast and deep through mouth and exhale through nostril five to six times with great force. Then come back to the former position and stand

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straight. Do this entire practice five to six times. After this, stand straight and closing one nostril with the fingers inhale fast and deep through mouth and exhale through nostril 15-20 times with great force. Repeat with the other nostril. Then, do it with both nostrils, together.

Benefits In addition to the benefits of *sūtra neti*, this practice alleviates anger and anxiety, banishes laziness, makes one feel fresh, helps in activation of the *ājñā cakra* (third eye) and removes problems of the eyes.

DUGDHA NETI (MILK NETI)

Making milk flow through the nasal passages is called *dugdha neti*. It should be practised after *sūtra neti*.

Practice — Pre-boiled milk that has been cooled should be poured with the help of *neti* pot. One should slightly bend forward lest the milk enters the nerves of the forehead and skull. Repeat for the other nostril.

Precautions — Those with windy disposition should add *sauṅṭha* (dried and powdered ginger) to the milk, boil it, cool it and then use it.

Benefits The practice proves highly beneficial for those suffering from blood pressure problems, tuberculosis and premature greying of hair.

OTHER NETIS (OIL, CLARIFIED BUTTER, ALMOND OIL AND URINE)

The *neti*, done with oils, i.e., mustard oil, clarified butter and oil of almonds, proves very beneficial. It is done after *jala neti* (water *neti*) in the morning or at night before going to bed. With a clean dropper few drops are poured into both nostrils and then one inhales with a force.

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Urine *neti* is done in a similar manner as *jala neti* (water *neti*), but only in mornings.

Precautions — One should not practice any *neti* without the guidance and presence of an expert *guru* (master) or Āyurvedic physician.

Benefits Using these liquids in *neti*, removes problems related to the brain, hair and respiratory system.

DHAUTI (WASH)

The process of cleansing the entire food pipe from the mouth to the anal opening is called *dhauti*. It includes easy practices for cleansing of the teeth, eyes, ears, tongue and scalp. *Dhauti* means to wash. *Dhauti*, thus, is an easy process of cleansing the body. It includes 12 different processes, which are as follows:

1. *Danta dhauti*
2. *Netra dhauti*
3. *Jihvāmūla dhauti*
4. *Karṇa dhauti*
5. *Kapāla dhauti*
6. *Hṛdaya dhauti*
7. *Vastra dhauti*
8. *Vamana dhauti*
9. *Vārisāra dhauti* or *śaṅkha prakṣālana*
10. *Mūla dhauti*
11. *Vātasāra dhauti*
12. *Vahnisāra dhauti*

DANTA DHAUTI (TEETH WASH)

For the maintenance of healthy teeth and for enhancing the digestion process, this is a good practice. The best natural means for the cleansing of the teeth is *dātuna*, i.e., a stick from the *nīm* (*Margosa*) or *kīkara* (*Indian Acacia*) tree. First, the stick should be chewed properly so that one end becomes frayed like a brush and, then, it should be rubbed around the teeth for cleaning. One can also prepare dental powder from *katthā* (catechu) according to the Āyurvedic system of medicine. Or one could prepare

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another dental powder from alum. Crush alum and fry it on a low flame in a frying pan. To six spoons of *lahaurī namaka* (Pakistani salt), add one spoon of fried alum and some mustard oil to make a paste. Store this paste and then clean the teeth with it, daily. Always remember to massage the gums with a finger after brushing the teeth.

NETRA DHAUTI (EYE WASH)

Fill the mouth with water and then splash fresh water into the eyes to clean them. One can use an eye cup, at least, three times a day to clean the eyes. For this, one can use plain water (warmed in winter) or water in which some *triphalā* (mixture of dried myrobalans) has been soaked and kept, for at least 8 hours and filtered.

Benefits Doing this, rémedies several problems related to the eyes.

JIHVAMŪLA DHAUTI (TONGUE WASH)

The *Margosa* or *Acacia* stick used for cleansing the teeth should be split after taking off its bark. With this split stick the tongue should be cleaned. Alternatively, one can use tongue cleaners, available in the market. In the end, with the three fingers — fore, middle and ring — the root of the tongue at the back of the mouth should also be cleaned. Take care to keep the nails trimmed and clean.

Benefits It not only cleans the tongue but also removes phlegm.

KARṆA DHAUTI (EAR WASH)

Always keep the nails of the fingers trimmed. Using the index finger, ring finger and small finger in order clean the inner ear. One can also use a copper or silver cleaner available in the market. Ear sticks which have cotton ends can also be used.

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Benefits Besides cleaning the ears, this makes the hearing better and prevents loss of hearing.

KAPĀLA DHAUTI (HEAD WASH)

It should be done when taking a bath. Rub the middle of the skull vigorously with the thumb and the fingers.

Benefits This enables control over the entire body and remedies problems related to imbalance of phlegm. It proves very beneficial in asthma and tuberculosis.

HṚDAYA DHAUTI (HEART WASH)

It is meant to cleanse the organs of the body around the heart, in particular, the respiratory tract and food pipe. It can be done with *daṇḍa* and *vastra*.

In *daṇḍa dhauti* one uses a special *daṇḍa* or soft stick or the inner rod-like core of a banana tree. It should be half inch in diameter and two feet long. The more it is flexible the better. Slowly and without any jerks the *daṇḍa* must be pushed into the food pipe. Then it should be pulled out.

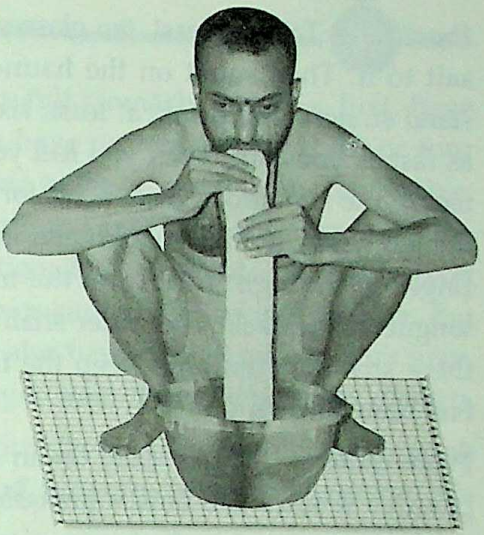
Benefits This practice removes phlegm, acidity and problems of the respiratory tract. This practice should be done after *vamana kriyā* (voluntary vomiting of water).

VASTRA DHAUTI (WASH BY CLOTH)

For this one needs a very fine cotton cloth. It should be a strip about two inches wide and 25 ft long. It should be kept rolled up. It should be soaked in clean water or warm salty water.

Practice — Sit on the haunches, i.e., sit on your feet and put one end of the strip in the mouth. Roll the bit of cloth into the mouth to smear it with saliva and then try to swallow it slowly and

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Vastra dhauti (wash by cloth)

carefully. In the beginning swallow only 2-3 inches and then pull it out. If you feel uncomfortable while swallowing or hiccups start, then soak the cloth in water in which honey or milk has been mixed. Go on swallowing till only a bit of the other end is left outside. Let the cloth remain inside for 20 minutes. Then slowly extract the cloth. If there is problem in pulling the cloth out, drink some salty water and vomit. Pull the cloth out very slowly. After the practice wash the cloth properly with soap and leave it for drying.

Precautions — Take care that the cloth does not reach the intestines. Try the practice early morning on an empty stomach.

Benefits This practice removes phlegm, mucous and excess bile from the stomach. It also cures ulcers of the stomach. It also remedies asthma, excess phlegm, cough, enlarged spleen, fever, indigestion and leprosy. It also enhances the vision.

VAMANA DHAUTI (WASH BY VOMITTING)

The process of cleansing the stomach by vomiting of water voluntarily is called *vamana dhauti*. This is of two types — *kuñjala* or *gajakaraṇī kriyā* and *vyāghra kriyā*.

(a) ***Kuñjala kriyā*** **(*Vomitting*)** — Just as an elephant sucks water through its trunk and regurgitates it, similarly, the process of drinking water and, then, voluntarily, vomiting is called *gajakaraṇī* or *kuñjala kriyā*.

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Practice — Take, at least, ten glasses of warm water and add little salt to it. Then squat on the haunches, i.e., sit on your feet or stand straight and drink, at least, six to seven glasses of the water as fast as you can. When you feel you can have no more and you feel full to the throat, then, bend forward at an angle of 90º. Press the left hand into the stomach and insert the forefinger and middle finger of the right hand into the mouth to the very root of the tongue at the back. The water shall gush out like a fountain and there shall be vomiting. Keep the fingers there till all the water has been thrown out.

Precautions — Do this daily on an empty stomach. It is better to practice it after the *śaṅkha prakṣālana* practice. Depending on the problems one is suffering from, one can also practice it without first doing the *śaṅkha prakṣālana*. One should do this, regularly, for, at most, a month. If, after the practice, you feel irritation or dryness in the throat, then, about 15-20 minutes later have some fruit juice. Have solid food only after an hour. If one is not able to vomit all the water one must not worry, for, it shall be expelled in the form of urine. It can be harmful to add a lot of salt. Heart patients should not practice *kuñjala kriyā* in the beginning. Those with high blood pressure must do the practice with warm water without salt. First, they should make their heart stronger through *āsana*s and other Yoga practices.

Benefits It keeps acidity in control and removes gas from the stomach. It also removes phlegm and excessive mucous from the food pipe. It eliminates cough, asthma and other respiratory problems. It keeps the digestion and health in a state of perfect balance.

(b) *Vyāghra kriyā* (*A lion's wash*) — A lion, after hunting its prey, has its fill and, after 2-3 hrs, it vomits the semi-digested food. Similarly, in case of indigestion, a human being too can regurgitate the undigested food. This is called *vyāghra kriyā*. It is not a natural process of expelling unwanted or undigested food, rather it is a voluntary practice.

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Practice — This is done on a full stomach. For this, first, have your fill of food, till you can have no more. After three or four hours, when you feel heaviness in the stomach or uncomfortable, stand erect, as in *kuñjala kriyā* and inserting the fingers in the mouth, vomit the food. Traditionally, it is believed that it is good to eat *khīr* (sweet porridge of rice and milk) after half an hour. But this is not necessary. One can also have diluted milk or fruit juice. When vomiting, if food emerges from the nose perform *jala neti*.

Precautions — Those suffering from heart problems, stomach ulcers, hernia and high blood pressure must not perform this practice.

Benefits This practice prevents problems related to over-eating and unsafe food. The poisonous elements are expelled from the body and it leads to a balance between bile and acid in the stomach.

VĀRISĀRA DHAUTI (WATER WASH) ŚAṄKHA PRAKṢĀLANA

Vāri means water, *sāra* means essence and *dhauti* means to wash or cleanse. Thus, *vārisāra dhauti* means to drink water, imparting speed to it when it is in the body and, thus, cleanse the body. Also because the intestines in our body are shaped like a *śaṅkha* or a conch-shell and its cleansing is done, i.e., *prakṣālana*; thus this practice is called *śaṅkha prakṣālana*. Although this practice cleanses the entire canal from the mouth to the anus, it is said to benefit the intestines the most. This is because the region from mouth to stomach can be cleansed through the above mentioned practices and the anal opening through *mūla dhauti* practice. This practice is of two types — *laghu śaṅkha prakṣālana* and *pūrṇa śaṅkha prakṣālana*.

Pūrṇa Śaṅkha Prakṣālana (The Complete Water Wash)

Preparation — Before you want to perform this practice, in the evening of the previous day, you should have only light food. The

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day you want to perform this practice do not have tea, coffee or any food. In other words perform it with empty stomach. Take a clean bucket or a large container and fill it with filtered and boiled water — at least 25-30 glasses. For filtration cover the mouth of a clean bucket or container with a fine cloth. On the cloth sprinkle some salt. Then pour pre-boiled water through the cloth. The salt shall dissolve as the water is filtered. Taste the water. The salt must be neither too much nor too less. For the practice, wear loose clothes. Better wear *paijāmā* (loose pants) and *kurtā* (loose shirt). Try out the practice in an open airy place, free from pollution and noise. It is better if two or three people try it together so that they are encouraged and do not feel tense, tired or uncomfortable.

Practice — Drink two glasses of the specially prepared water speedily. After that practice the following five *āsana*s (yogic postures). Repeat each posture eight times. One can drink the water squatting on the haunches or standing straight. The postures, i.e., *āsana*s to be done are —

(1) *Tāḍāsana* — See page no 118.

(2) *Tiryaka tāḍāsana* — See page no 119.

(3) *Kaṭi cakrāsana* — See page no 116.

(4) *Tiryaka bhujaṅgāsana* — See page no 134.

(5) *Udara ākarṣaṇāsana* — See page no 85.

Practise these postures, i.e., *āsana*s as prescribed in the chapter 3 (**Science of Yogic Postures**). In the alimentary canal, there are many openings like doors beginning from the stomach up to the anus which open and close this part of the body during the digestion process. Hence, when practising *śaṅkha prakṣālana*, one also has to practise the above postures in order to open these and make the nerves and muscles relaxed so that the salty water can thoroughly clean the canal and reach the anal opening.

After practising these five postures eight times each, again drink two more glasses of water. Then repeat the postures, yet,

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once again. After that one again drink two more glasses and repeat the postures. Once you have done, this three times, i.e., consumed six glasses of water and done the postures, go to the toilet whether or not you feel bowel movement. But do not sit there, too long.

After trying to evacuate the bowels, return. If suffering from constipation, then, one can practise other postures like *kauvācāla āsana, bhujaṅgāsana, sarpāsana, pādottānāsana, pavanamuktāsana, makarāsana*, etc. These postures (*āsana*s) can also be done while breathing normally.

Drink two glasses of water and repeat the above *āsana*s and continue doing so till there is bowel movement. Do not exert to induce bowel movement. If there is some movement in between the set of *āsana*s do not stop. Complete the cycle. Also do not compare yourself with others. Each person has a different constitution.

When there is bowel movement, visit the toilet. Come back, drink two more glasses and repeat the postures. Keep visiting the toilet and drinking water and repeating the postures till clear water starts to come out of the anus. Generally, one may have to drink 16 to 25 glasses of water to achieve this. In extreme cases, one may have to drink up to 40 glasses. Whatever the case, do not worry.

Precautions — After the practice, even if you feel tired, do practise *kuñjala kriyā* and *jala neti*. After this, lie still or sit still or try to enter into yogic sleep for 45 minutes. In any case, do not drop to deep sleep. After 45 minutes to an hour, eat thin *khicaḍī* of *mūṅga dāla* (salty porridge of rice and green lentils) with 75 to 100 gm *ghī* liquified butter added to it. *Ghī* is necessary as the salty water does not only flush out all the excreta rather it also removes the natural lubricating, protective layer that lines the alimentary canal and the intestines. The *ghī*, thus, forms a protective layer of lubricating fat. The rice and green lentils (*mūṅga dāla*) in the *khicaḍī* provide carbohydrate and proteins, respectively. Also, this food is easily digestible.

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In the evening, too, one should have *khicaḍī* but this time it sould be thick and more solid. At least, for one week, have light food. Do not have curd, milk, their preparations, spices, pickle, heavy food, etc., for at least, three days. For one week, do not have tea, coffee, wine, cigarette, betel leaf, tobacco, addictive things, fast foods, eggs, meat, fish, acidic food and food growing underground like potatoes and *arvī* (*arum carocasia*). Have simple, easily digestible and pure natural food. In other words, do not consume food that remains inside for a long time or takes long time to digest. For a week, do not practice hard and tough yogic postures, too. A person, with weak intestines or one suffering from swelling in the stomach or intestines, should not try this practice.

Benefits The root cause of many diseases is poisonous substances that get accumulated in the intestines, which make the blood impure. This has a negative effect on the entire body. Through the practice of *śaṅkha prakṣālana*, all toxic substances are expelled, the blood gets purified and the health improves. Many ailments related to the digestive system like diabetes, high acidity, dysentry, indigestion and impure blood are remedied through this practice. Even those who are healthy, can benefit a lot as the practice makes the body light and active, the mind pure and the mood happy. This practice is a must for those desiring spiritual elevation, for it makes *kriyā yoga, kuṇḍalinī yoga* and *mantra* chanting easier.

Frequency — One should perform this practice once in six months. It is best to do it in March-April and then in September-October. One should do under or seek the guidance of an expert Yoga teacher.

Laghu śaṅkha prakṣālana (The Semi water wash) As explained in the *pūrṇa śaṅkha prakṣālana*, prepare six glasses of salt water. Practise this early in the morning without eating anything. As explained earlier, drink two glasses of water three times in between

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repetition of the five postures. Each time, repeat every posture eight times.

Under proper guidance, a person can practise it daily, or do it once or twice every week. There are no strict rules regarding the type of food to be eaten, after the practice but one should take care not to eat or drink anything, at least, till an hour after the practice. It is better to try the practice once a week unless otherwise prescribed by an expert.

Precautions — Patients with ulcers or wounds in the stomach or intestines must not do this practice. Those with high blood pressure should practise with warm water without any salt in it.

Benefits Other than benefits enumerated in *pūrṇa śaṅkha prakṣālana*, this practice is helpful in removing different types of stones and kidney problems. It is also beneficial for the excretory system.

MŪLA DHAUTI (ANAL WASH)

This practice is for cleansing of the other end of the alimentary canal, namely, the anus. In this practice, a soft root of turmeric is inserted slowly into the anus and after rotating it slowly 2-3 times it is removed. If the root is not available, one can use the middle or index finger. For lubrication one can dip the finger or root in mustard oil.

Benefits Cleansing of the anal opening leads to elemination of contamination, easy evacuation of hard stools and proper expulsion of gas. It also prevents piles and fissures.

VĀTASĀRA DHAUTI (AIR WASH)

Inhaling air through the mouth to activate the stomach is known as *vātasāra dhauti*. This practice is also practised in *bhujaṅginī-mūdrā*. For this, one opens the mouth fully and then takes in air. This air reaches the stomach and it is rotated for some time. Then yawning slowly the air is expelled.

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Benefits This practice remedies many problems of stomach.

VAHNISĀRA DHAUTI OR AGNISĀRA KRIYĀ (FIRE WASH)

This practice is done to make the digestive system stronger. For this, sit in diamond pose (*vajrāsana*). Fully or partially close the eyes so that there is no pressure on the eye lids. Placing both hands on the knees bend forward keeping the back straight. Keep the hands straight too. Open the mouth and push the tongue out fully. Then pressing the stomach in and pushing it out inhale and exhale rapidly, simultaneously, bloating and squeezing the stomach (just like a dog's panting). The breathing should be rhythmic. Exhale and inhale, at least, 20 to 25 times. Rest for some time and then, again, practise it. Do this three times. One should perform this practice on an empty stomach, half an hour before food or four hours after having food. If tried along with *mūla bandha*, it proves more beneficial.

Precautions — Those with high blood pressure, heart problems and ulcers must not practice this *dhauti*.

Benefits It is a panacea for people who have a weak liver, windy disposition, indigestion, weak digestive system and other stomach problems.

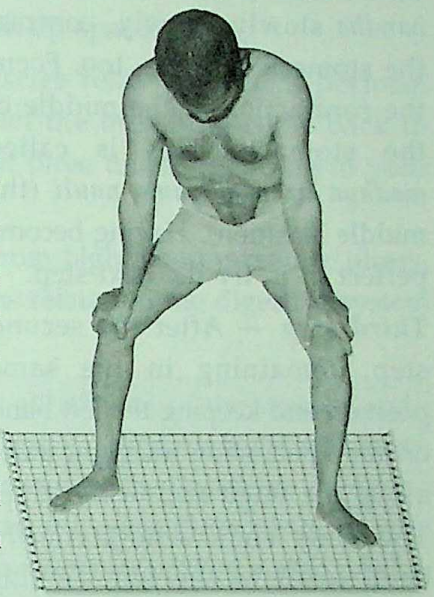
NAULI (ABDOMINAL ISOLATION)

This is a very effective practice for massage of the organs in the stomach region and for making them stronger. The practice makes these organs work better. As a result, it leads to riddance from various ailments and perfect physical health.

Precautions — One should do this practice only after one has become perfect in the three *bandhas* (*jālandhara*, *uḍḍiyāna* and *mūla*) and when one is able to remain without breathing in air for

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a considerable time in the practice of *bāhya kumbhaka* (holding the breath out). Before starting this practice one should become perfect in *agnisāra kriyā* and *uḍḍiyāna bandha*. It is better to try and learn under an expert teacher. It is better to practise it 2-3 hrs after having food or early morning on an empty stomach.

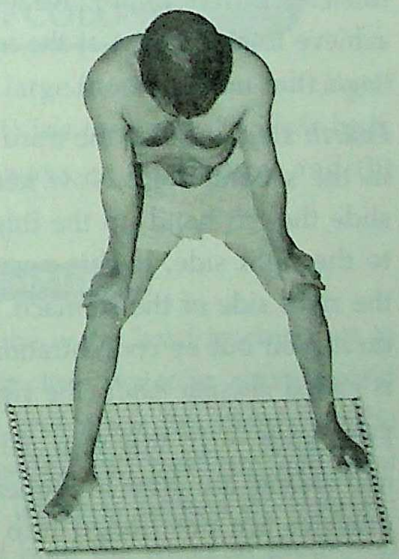


Nauli - second step

Practice — There are three types of *nauli* — *madhya*, *vāma* and *dakṣiṇa*. The practice is done in five steps.

First step — Seated in *padmāsana* (lotus pose), *vajrāsana* (diamond pose or standing straight) do *agnisāra kriyā* and *uḍḍiyāna Bandha*.

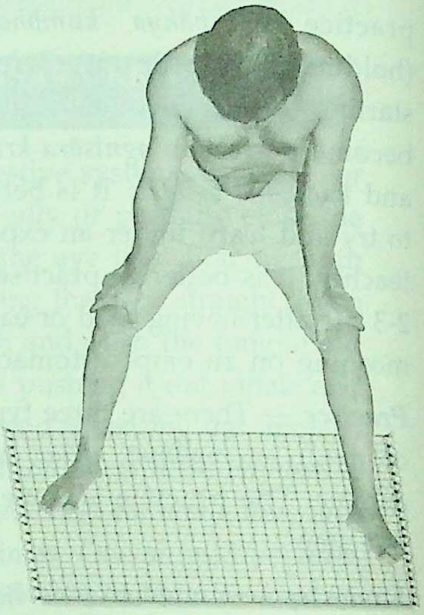
Second step — To begin with, it will be easy (comfortable) to practise this in the standing pose. Thus, a new initiate must do this standing. Keep the feet 1½ ft apart and place both the hands on the thighs. Exhale and perform *uḍḍiyāna* and *jālandhara bandhas*. Pressing the hands into the thighs slide the palms so as to reach the knees. Keep the stomach loose (without inhaling). Contracting the sphincter muscles, perform *mūla*



Nauli - third step

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bandha slowly. Slowly, contract the stomach muscles, too. Focus the contraction in the middle of the stomach. This is called *madhya* or *madhyama nauli* (the middle isolation). Having become perfect in it, try the next step.



Nauli - fourth step

Third step — After the second step, remaining in the same position and keeping the left hand on the knee, slide the right palm along the thigh and bring it up. The body shall auto-matically bend a bit to the left. In this position, practise a bit and focus the contraction of the stomach muscles in the left side. Although when you bend to the left the muscles in left shall contract but through better focus one can achieve total isolation of the muscles in the left. This is called *vāma nauli* (the left isolation).

Fourth step — After the third step return to the position assumed in the second step. Now keeping the right hand on the knee, slide the left hand up the thigh. The body shall on its own bend to the right side. In this position, try and isolate the muscles in the right side of the stomach. Although bending to the right shall do it a bit but by concentration one can achieve full isolation. This is called *dakṣiṇa nauli* (the right isolation).

Fifth step — In this step, all the three parts, i.e., *madhya, vāma* and *dakṣiṇa* are done in sequence. From *madhya nauli*, the stomach muscles are positioned into *vāma nauli*, back to *madhya nauli*, then do *dakṣiṇa nauli* and back to *madhya nauli*. Thus, the muscles are rotated from left to right and vice versa. For this, one should

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keep sliding the hands up and down the thighs. Starting from the *madhya nauli* start rotating the muscles to the left, then middle and then to the right. Slowly pick-up speed.

After each step, let the muscles relax and, then, perform *pūraka*, i.e., inhale deeply and let the breathing come back to normal. Repeat each step, at least three times, according to your capacity.

Precautions — Those suffering from high blood pressure, ulcers, hernia and other serious problems related to the digestive system must not practice this.

Benefits This practice removes all ailments of the stomach and increases sexual power. Spiritually speaking, it helps in the activation of *maṇipūra cakra*. The practice remedies the imbalance between wind, phlegm and bile in the body. It loosens the stools that stick to the walls of the intestines and banishes constipation. It also strikes a balance between *samāna* and *apāna vāyu*. It also banishes ailments related to digestive system, excretory system and respiratory system.

BASTI (INTESTINAL WASH – CLEANSING OF COLON)

This is a practice for cleansing the large intestine and making it stronger. It can be of two types — (1) *Jala basti* and (2) *Sthala basti*. *Jala basti* too can be tried in two ways — (a) Natural and (b) Artificial (using enema).

JALA BASTI (WATER CLEANSING)

(a) ***Natural*** — Stand in water with the water level reaching up to the navel. One should stand in fresh clean water in a river, pond or swimming pool. Bend forward and place the hands on the knees. Expand the sphincter muscles and perform *uḍḍiyāna bandha* and perform *nauli*, so that water is sucked up through the anus. Perform *mūla bandha* and hold the water in the bowel

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for some time. Then visit the toilet and expel the water through the anus. During the retention of water, perform *aśvinī-mudrā*.

Alternative — Those who cannot do this should take a six inch long pipe with one end width (opening), able to fit the small finger and the other end opening (width) able to take in the forefinger. Insert the smaller end into the anus. Then, perform the steps mentioned above. When the water is in, remove the pipe.

(b) *Artificial (enema)* — Those who cannot do *basti* by any of the afore-mentioned methods can use an enema. This is a modern and easy way. For this, one needs an enema apparatus that is easily available with the chemist. It consists of a pipe and a container. Fill about half litre water in the container and place the container at a certain height. One end of the pipe shall be linked to the container. Lie down on the stomach and insert the other end of the pipe into the anus and let the water flow in. When the water is in, remove the pipe and perform *mūla bandha*. Massage the stomach with both hands. Then lie on the right side and press the stomach in. Let the water remain in for two to three minutes and then go to the toilet and expel the water.

STHALA BASTI (SURFACE CLEANSING)

Get into the *paścimottānāsana* and performing the *aśvinī-mudrā*, draw air in through the anus twenty-five times. Then, retain the air for some time and expel it.

Practise *basti* only under the guidance of an expert. It is better to practise it in the morning after having gone to the toilet and cleaned your bowels. If you feel uncomfortable, then oil can be applied for lubrication on the pipe or the anal opening.

Benefits This practice cleanses the colon, expels extra gas, remedies ailments that result due to excessive heat in the anal region and also makes the blood pure. It also removes obesity and extra bile. It also makes the body temperature balanced.

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KAPĀLABHĀTI (BRAIN CLEANING)

Three simple practices for cleansing of the frontal part of the brain are together called *kapālabhāti*. These three practices are — *śītkrama, vyutkrama* and *vātakrama*.

Śītakrama : In this practice, water is taken in the mouth and expelled through the nose.

Vyutkrama : In this, water is sucked up through the nose and expelled through the mouth.

These practices have the same benefits as *jala neti*. Rather, the benefits manifest in a better way.

Vātakrama : This practice has been explained, in detail, in the fourth chapter, (**Science of Breathing**).

TRĀṬAKA (STARING — CONSTANT GAZING)

Constant gazing on some object is called *trāṭaka*. This practice makes the mind and eyesight stronger. *Trāṭaka* also activates the dormant spiritual powers. This practice can be done in many ways and it has been dealt with, in detail, in the tenth chapter, (**Science of Concentration**).

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3

Science of Postures (Āsana Vijñāna)

INTRODUCTION

In the *Pātañjala-Yoga-Sūtra, maharṣi* Patañjali has said —

sthiram sukham āsanam । — *YS*, 2/46

This verse hints at the basic requirements of posture. According to it, stillness and comfort constitute a posture. Actually, posture is a process of positioning all the parts of the body so that all the systems are benefited and one feels at ease.

There are 84 lakh different living beings in this world. If one follows the posture in which they relax, one arrives at 84 lakh different *āsana*s, i.e., yogic postures, which human beings can practise. But, among these, only 84 are important. *Yogī* Yāgjñavalkya considered only eight postures significant for the spiritual progress of a human being. These eight are: *svastika, gomukha, padma, vīra, siṁha, bhadra, mukta* and *mayūra*.

The main aim of postures is to strike a balance between the physical and subtle bodies. Stillness, the first requirement of a posture relates to the physical body, while a balance between the body and mind leading to peace and comfort relate to subtle body. Postures make a human, bodily and mentally strong, healthy, happy, active and capable of storing energy within.

There is a lot of difference between exercise and Yoga. The following table makes the difference clear.

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S.No	Exercise	Yoga
1.	Has effect on physical body only	Affects both subtle and physical bodies
2.	Leads to loss of *prāṇic* energy	Leads to generation and storage of *prāṇic* energy
3.	Leads to ailments in old age	Leads to an ever disease free physique
4.	Due to unnatural strain, the body becomes rigid	The body becomes flexible and well shaped
5.	All glands are not affected, equally	All glands are affected equally and thus there is a balance.
6.	Alien elements are not totally thrown out of the body	Alien elements are totally thrown out of the body
7.	The breathing process becomes uncontrolled	There is total control over breathing process and the lungs become strong
8.	The body becomes unnaturally shapeless	The entire body develops in a balanced manner
9.	There is no proper exercise of celibacy	There is proper control over celibacy
10.	Does not lead to remedying of diseases	Ailments are remedied
11.	Due to unbalanced blood circulation, different body systems do not remain balanced	Due to balanced blood circulation, all body systems remain balanced
12.	Only muscles get developed and affected	Not only muscles, even affected inner organs and subtle parts of the body are affected and developed
13.	The mind becomes weak	There is development of a strong, capable mind
14.	Person becomes impractical in his decisions	One becomes capable of taking practical and wise decisions
15.	The body gets tired	One feels comfortable, active and light
16.	Takes more time and leads to loss of *prāṇic* energy	In less time, one gets more benefit and *prāṇic* energy gets stored
17.	One needs lot of space, open area and exercising kit	One needs less space. It can be done in a room and without much equipment
18.	Only young can do. Old cannot	Persons of all ages can do it
19.	Cannot do when travelling	One can do Yoga, even when travelling
20.	Is not capable of generating a society that is clean and strong	It brings a positive change in mind and feelings and, thus, can bring about a transformation in the society

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Not just this, one gains many more things from Yoga — good health, more working capacity, stamina, disease-free physique, pure mind, balanced and simple life, unprejudiced mind, active mind, concentration, tension-free mind, patience, forgiveness, intelligence, peace and joy due to balance between mind and body, zeal and purity. Hence, for all round development one should practise Yoga instead of exercises.

According to the type of practitioner of Yoga, the various yogic postures can be divided into three categories — for beginners, for intermediate practitioners and for the advanced. According to the type of postures the science of yogic postures can be divided into seven groups.

(a) Relaxation postures

(b) Meditation postures

(c) Postures performed in seated position

(d) Postures performed when standing

(e) Postures performed lying on the stomach

(f) Postures performed lying on the back

(g) Postures performed balanced on the head

PRECAUTIONS IN YOGA

When practising the yogic postures, one must keep some guidelines in mind.

EMPTY STOMACH

Before starting the postures practice, the urinary bladder and the intestines must be empty. Without stressing too much or using laxative or enema, empty the bowels in a natural way. Then, one must have a bath. Perform the postures early in the morning before eating anything or 3-4 hrs after having food. After having a sun-

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bath, practise the posture only after one hour.

BREATHING

One should always breathe through the nose when doing the *āsanas* unless, otherwise, instructed in some particular postures.

BLANKET

Take a blanket and fold it twice and use it as a mat. Do not use very soft mats or pneumatic cushions.

PLACE

Perform the postures in a well ventilated room that ensures fresh air. Do not practise postures in a room with strong wind, too much cold, smoke, bad smell, polluted air, stale air or one which is damp. Do not use fan when practising the postures.

THE BODY

During the practice, the mind and body must be tension-free and relaxed. Be relaxed and try the postures without exerting. In the beginning, there could be problems due to stiff muscles. So, do not force yourself. But, anyway, do keep practising. Slowly and steadily, you shall be able to perform the postures perfectly.

DURATION

Every posture has a time limit, that has been specifically mentioned in each yogic practice. Those who suffer from chronic problems should practise the postures only under the guidance of an expert Yoga teacher.

AWARENESS

Yoga is not exercising. Hence, be fully conscious of your body when you practise the postures. If you feel uncomfortable or there is pain in any part of the body or there is any adverse effect, immediately, stop the practise and consult an expert.

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CLOTHES

Wear loose, light and comfortable clothes during practise. Remove your glasses, watch and ornaments, when practising.

PREPARATIVE POSTURES

For practice of yogic postures, it is necessary for the physical body to be free of wind and rheumatism. Hence, in initial stages of practice, special postures like *pavanamuktāsana* and *śaktibandha āsana* are included in order to make the body diseases-free and fit.

Pavana means wind, *mukta* means to be free and *āsana* means a particular body posture. These postures aim at riddance from hindrances in Yoga, caused by wind disturbances.

Although, as the name suggests, these postures are meant to control wind humour, their practice also helps in establishing a harmony between all the three humours, namely wind, bile and phlegm.

(*According to the Indian system of medicine, i.e., Āyurveda and also scriptures of Yoga, the body constitutes of three humours namely wind, bile and phlegm. Any disturbance in the natural balance of any one or more can lead to disease and ailments.*)

The set of postures that comes under *pavanamuktāsana* can be divided into three parts — for cure of rheumatism, for cure of wind imbalance and for betterment of eyesight. Further, the first category is divided into three groups namely — *pādapavanamuktāsana*, *hastapavanamuktāsana* and *śiraḥ-pavanamuktāsana*.

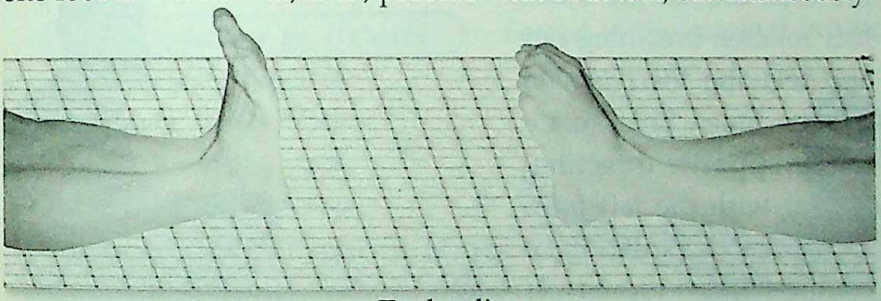
To begin with, one has to practise the corpse posture (*śavāsana*) for the first two minutes. (*In this one lies down straight with the body and mind relaxed.*) This posture is necessary for loosening up the body and also for a tension-free body and mind.

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PAVANAMUKTĀSANA — PART I (NON-RHEUMATIZING POSTURES)

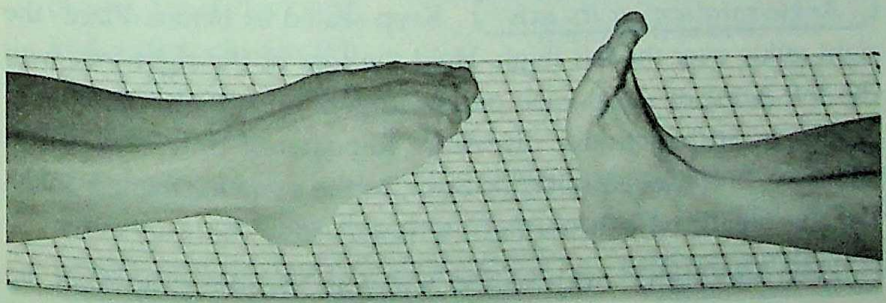
PĀDA PAVANAMUKTĀSANA (NON-RHEUMATIZING LEG POSTURES)

Toe bending Sit on a mat spreading the legs forward and straight. This position will be called as original position, hereafter. Now, place the palms on the floor behind the back and bend backwards taking support of the hands. Keep the hands straight without bending the elbows. Keep the eyes focused on the toes. Inhaling deeply, bend the toes inwards and then exhaling relax them. Do this ten times. Similarly, bend the toes outwards. The feet should not be raised above the ground. One can start with one foot at a time and, then, practise with both feet, simultaneously.



Toe bending

Ankle bending Seated, as in the previous posture, bend the feet from the ankles both forward and backward, breathing as before, i.e., inhaling, while bending and, exhaling, when relaxing.

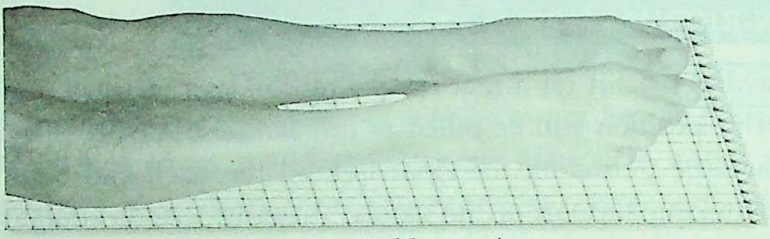


Ankle bending

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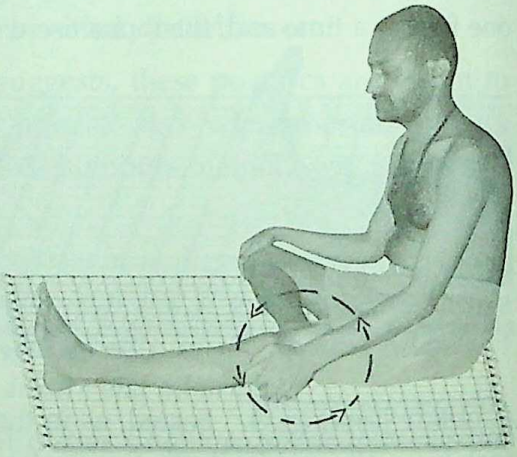
Do this ten times. Start with exercising one foot at a time and then go on to both legs, simultaneously.

Ankle rotation Seated, as in position one, keep the feet



Ankle rotation

about one foot apart. Then fix the heel of the right foot on the floor and rotate the foot only in a circle. Do the outer half rotation breathing in and bending the toes and do the inner half rotation breathing out and relaxing the toes. Do this ten times. Then rotate in the opposite direction. Repeat with the left foot. Then, practise rotation of both feet joined together. If you can't practise following the breathing rules, then, breathe normally during the whole practice.



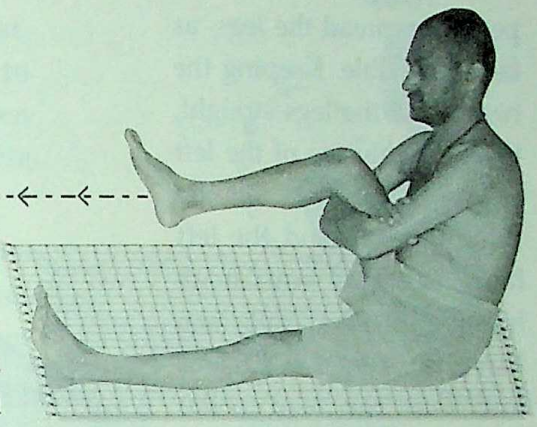
Ankle rotation on its axis

Ankle rotation on its axis Keep seated as before. Place the right ankle over the left thigh. Hold the toes of the right foot with the left hand or clasp each others fingers and, then, move it in circles in anticlockwise direction. Repeat ten times. Then, do similarly, in clockwise direction also. Do the same for the left ankle. Let the breath remain normal.

Knee bending Keep seated as before. Bending the right leg

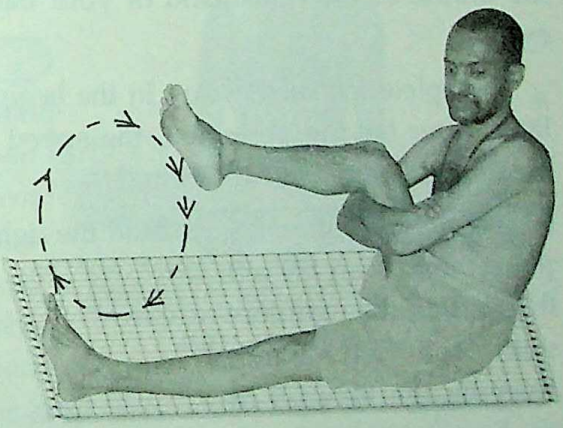
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from the knee raise it slightly above the ground with both the hands clasping each other under the right thigh. Then stretch the right leg straight without the heel touching the ground. Then bend the leg from the knee and let the heel touch the right buttock without touching the floor. Again, stretch the leg straight. Do this ten times. Repeat for left leg. When stretching the leg straight inhale and exhale when you bend the leg and let the heel to touch the buttock.



Knee bending

Knee rotation on its axis Seated in the original position, hug the left thigh to the chest with both hands locking each other, as shown. Keep the lower part of leg below the knee parallel to the floor. Then, rotate the lower part of leg below the knee in a circle form in front of you. Do it clockwise and anticlockwise ten times. Let the breath remain normal.



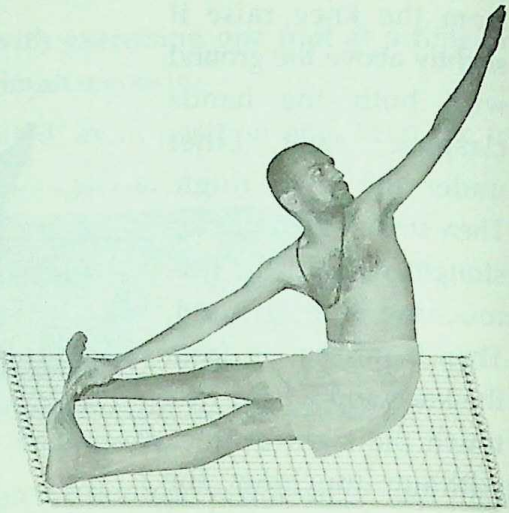
Knee rotation on its axis

During all the above-said postures it would be more beneficial if the eyes are kept closed and you meditate on *mūlādhāra cakra*.

Torso movement or spinal rotation Returning to the original

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position, spread the legs as far as possible. Keeping the hands and the legs straight, touch the big toe of the left leg by right hand. At the same time, extend the left hand towards your back high in the air. The two hands must be in a straight line. Turn the head to the left and look at the thumb of the extended left hand or your back.

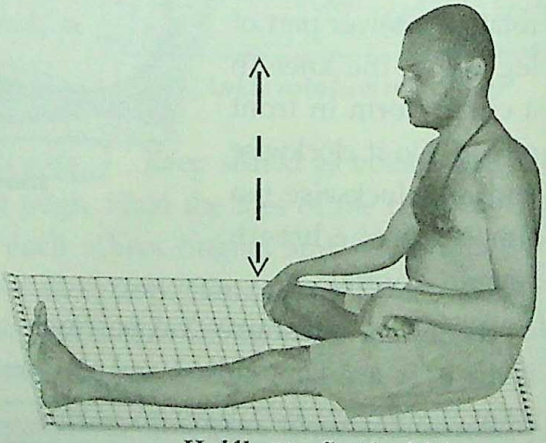


Torso movement or spinal rotation

Remain in this position for some moments and reverse the position, touching the right big toe by the left hand and the right hand extended backwards. Turn the head to the right and look at the thumb of the right hand or your back. This completes one cycle.

Complete ten such cycles. In the beginning, do it slowly and, later, after having perfected, the speed can be increased. The breathing should remain normal.

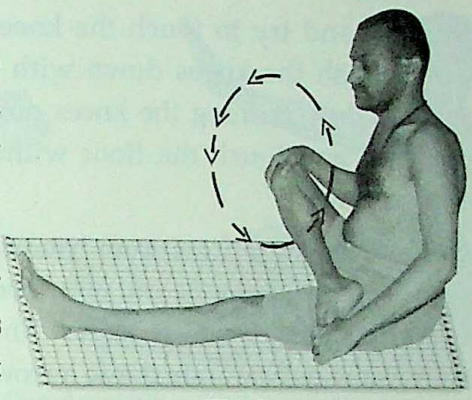
Half butterfly (for hip) Bend the right leg from the knee and place the foot on the left thigh. Hold the right foot with the left hand. Keeping the muscles of the bent right leg relaxed, hold the right knee with the right hand and move the knee up and down like a wing of a butterfly. When bringing it up, exhale and try to bring



Half butterfly (for hip)

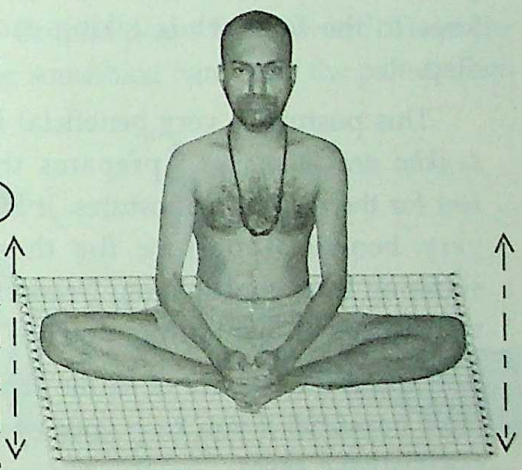
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the knee close to the chest. When lowering the knee to the floor, inhale. Do this ten times. Repeat in the reverse position with the left knee.



Thigh rotation

Thigh rotation Position yourself as in the earlier posture and holding the toes of the right foot with the left hand and hold your right knee by your right hand. Now, rotate leg from the right knee in circles. Slowly, try to increase the area swept by the circle. Do this ten times each, clockwise and anti-clockwise. Then, repeat in the reverse position by rotating the left knee. The breath be normal.



Full butterfly (for hip)

Full butterfly (for hip)

Beginner's practice — Remain in the same posture. Then bring the knees up and down in butterfly motion. When raising the knees exhale and inhale when pushing the knees to the floor. Don't bend and touch the floor by your head. This can be done by a beginner, holding the knees by hand and pushing-pulling up and down. In this practice be seated straight. Do this at least fifteen times.

Advanced practice — Sit in the original position and, then, position the two feet in such a way that the soles of both are joined together. Push the heels of the two feet as much as you can towards your body. Hold the toes of the feet together with interlocked hands. Lift your folded legs upwards in front of you making your hands

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straight and try to touch the knees each other in front of you. Next, push the knees down with the elbows of the respective hand. When pushing the knees down exhale and bend the body forward and touch the floor with the forehead. Do this ten to fifteen times.

Crow walk Sit on your haunches on the floor. Balance on your toes. Place the palms on the knees. Then start walking. This is similar to a crow's walk. For this, lower the left knee and touch it to the floor. Then raise, the right foot and take it forward and place it besides the left knee. Touch the knee to the floor while taking each step.



Crow walk

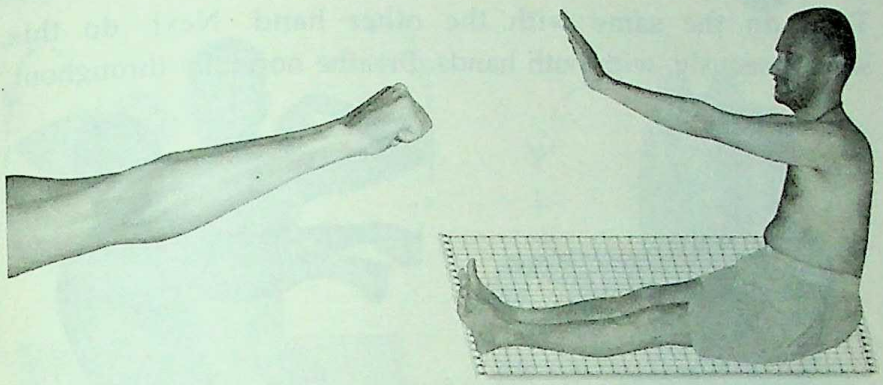
This posture is very beneficial in *śaṅkha prakṣālana* and prepares the feet for the meditative postures. It is a very beneficial posture for those suffering from constipation. Drinking water prior to this posture-practice ends constipation.

During the practice of all the above-said postures, it would be more beneficial if you keep your eyes closed and meditate on the *svādhiṣṭhāna cakra*.

HASTA-PAVANAMUKTĀSANA (WIND RELEASING OR NON-RHEUMATIZING HAND POSTURES)

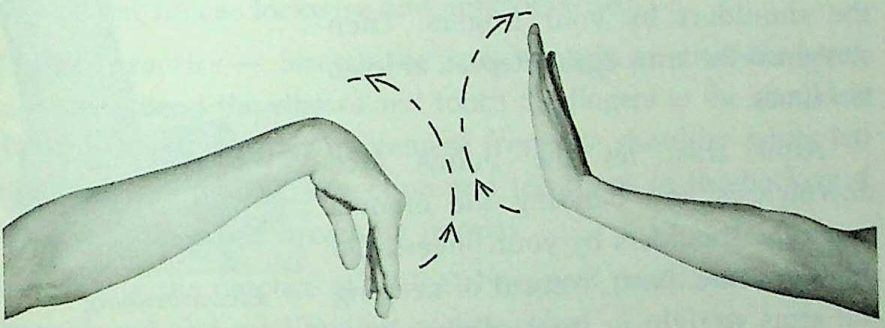
Fist clenching Sit in the original position. Hold the arms straight in front of the body at shoulder level. Inhale and stretch out the fingers of the hands making them rigid and tense. Close the fingers to form a fist clenching it tightly. Then, exhaling let the fingers relax, and open the fist. Do this ten times.

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Fist clenching

Wrist bending Return to the initial position of the above posture and keep the arms stretched straight ahead at shoulder level keeping the palms down. Inhale and bend the hands upwards from the wrist so that the palms face forward. Tense the hands as if you are pushing something hard with the palms. Then



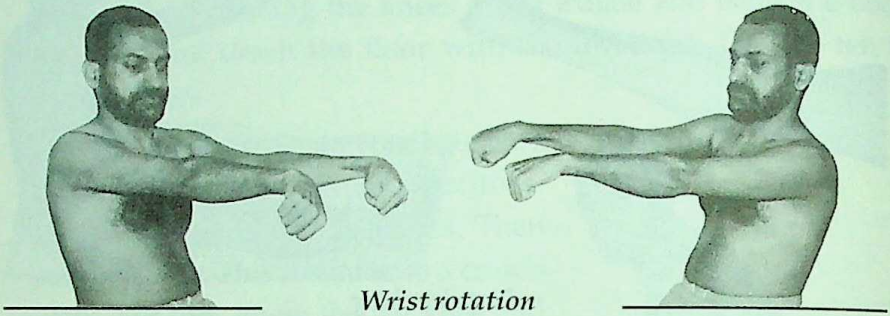
Wrist bending

exhaling bend the hands downwards from the wrist so that the fingers point down and the palm faces you and relax. Do this ten times.

Wrist rotation Keep only one arm stretched straight ahead at the level of the shoulder. Clench the fist tight and then rotate the fist from the wrist ten times each clockwise and anticlockwise.

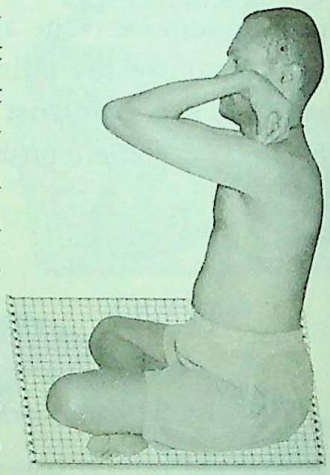
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Then do the same with the other hand. Next, do this, simultaneously, with both hands. Breathe normally throughout.



Wrist rotation

Elbow bending Open the fist and keep the hands stretched straight in front of you at shoulder level. The palms must face upwards. Then breathing normally bend the hands from the elbow and touch the shoulders by your fingers. Then straighten the arms again. Repeat, at least, ten times.

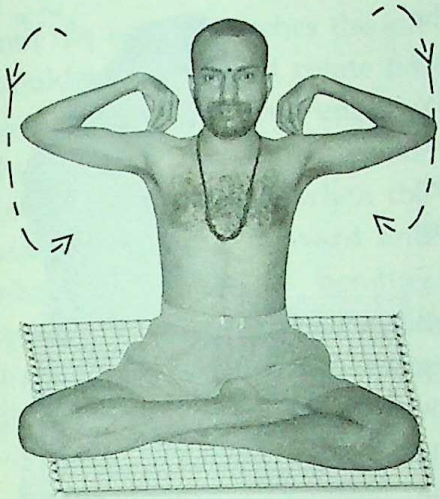


Elbow bending

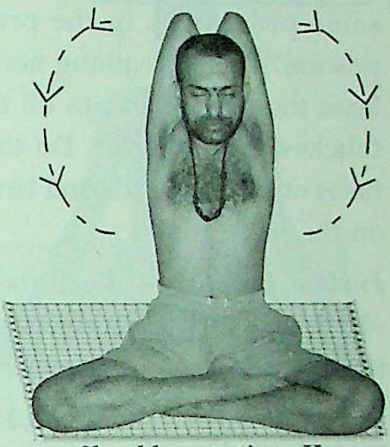
After this, let the palms face downwards and bending the elbows touch the shoulders by your fingers. Do this ten times. Next, instead of keeping the arms straight in front of you, keep them at shoulder level stretched sideways. Bend the elbows and touch the shoulders by your finger. Repeat ten times each with the palms facing upwards and downwards.

Shoulder rotation Sit in the original position and keep the arms stretched straightforward at shoulder level. Bend the elbows and touch the fingers to the shoulders. Now inhaling deeply move the bent elbows upwards so that the hands almost touch the ears. Then open the bent hands sideways. Next exhaling bring the bent hands down so that the upper arms touch the sides.

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Shoulder rotation



Shoulder rotation - II

Bring the hands back to the original position. While rotating when the hands come in front of you, the elbows must touch each other. Repeat ten times clockwise and anticlockwise.

Further practice — Stretch the arms straight at shoulder level, sideways. Bend the elbows and touch the fingers to the shoulder. Then, make a circular movement from the shoulder joints ten times in the forward direction and ten times in the backward direction. Keep the breathing normal.

During the practice of all the above-said practices, keep your eyes closed and meditate on *anāhata cakra*.

ŚIRAḤ-PAVANAMUKTĀSANA (WIND RELEASING OR NON-RHEUMATIZING HEAD AND NECK POSTURES)

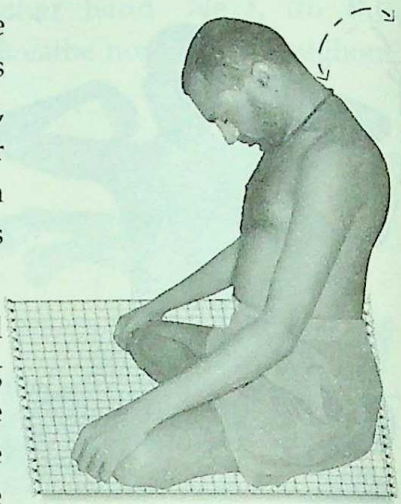
Neck forward bending

Sit in the original position. Then, place the elbows of both hands on the respective thigh and keep the fingers relaxed. Slowly exhale and bend the head forward from the neck, till the chin touches the chest. Then, inhaling bend the head backwards as much as you can. Do this ten times.

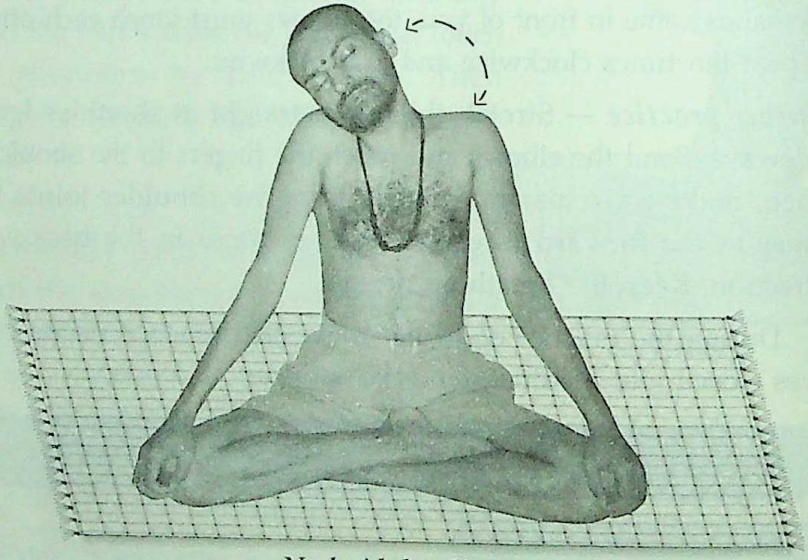
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Neck side bending Sit in the same position as in the previous posture. Then, breathing normally, bend the head sideways till the ear touches the shoulder. Do this ten times on the right side and ten times on the left.

Further practice — Keep the head straight and then breathing normally turn the head towards the right and look backwards. Do the same from the left side. Turn the head sideways, as shown, ten times on each side.



Neck forward bending



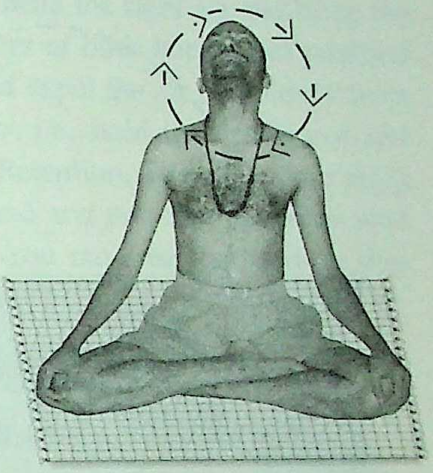
Neck side bending

Neck rotation Sit in the same position as in the previous posture. Then relaxing, completely, rotate the head in circles slowly. Exhaling raise the head forward slightly and then rotate it towards the right so that the ear touches the shoulder. Next inhaling rotate the head backwards and move towards your left

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until the left ear touches the left shoulder. Exhale and rotate the head forward and bend until the chin rests on the chest. Remember to exhale when the head is bending forward and inhale when it is bending backward. Do this ten times and then rotate in the opposite direction, ten times.

During all the neck postures, keeping your eyes closed, concentrate on the eyebrow centre i.e. the *ājñā cākra*.



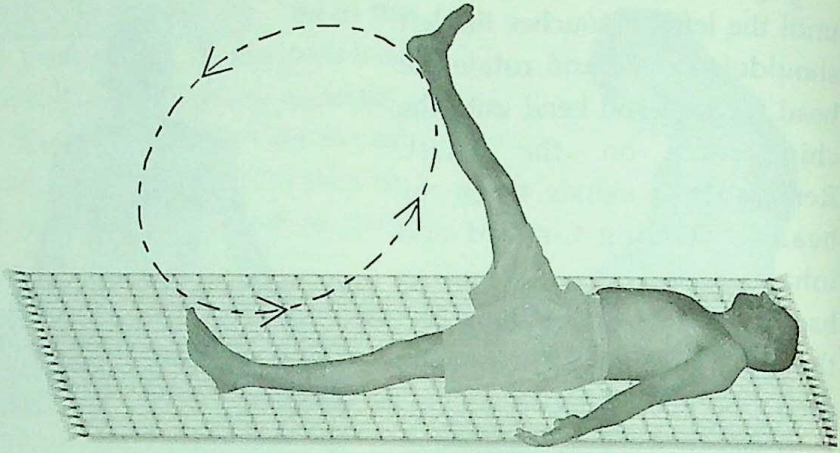
Neck rotation

PAVANAMUKTĀSANA — PART II (FOR EXPELLING GAS)

Benefits These sets of postures benefit those suffering from constipation, indigestion, problems of nerves and muscles, pain in the body, etc. These postures also make the body capable of practising the tougher postures. Lie in the *śavāsana* (corpse pose) and make the body relaxed before practising these postures.

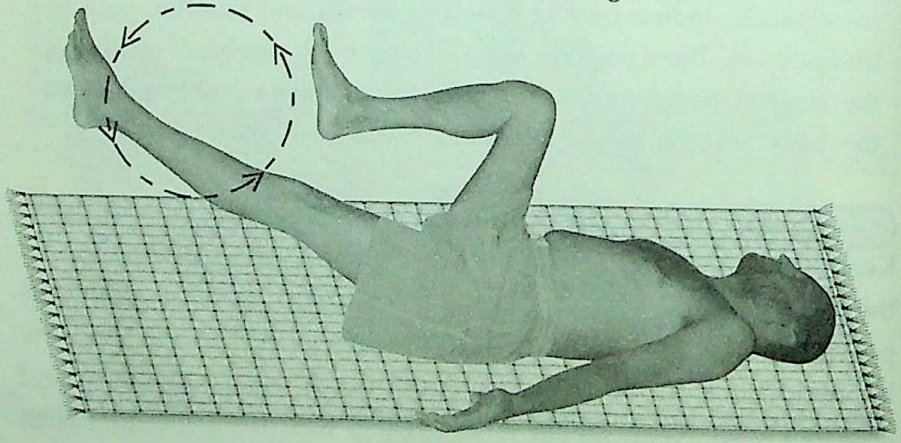
Leg rotation Lie on the back and keep the legs straight. Keep the hands on both sides of the body. Pressing the palms on the floor, raise the right leg keeping it straight. Raise it as high as possible and, then, rotate it from the hip joint. Do not bend the leg or touch it to the floor. Do it ten times, each, clockwise and anticlockwise. Next, repeat with left leg. Rest for a few moments when changing the legs. While raising in the form of a circle inhale and hold your breath and while bringing down exhale.

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Leg rotation

Cycling Lie on the back. Raise the right leg and move the leg bending it from the knee, bringing the knee close to the stomach and, then, stretching it as if one is cycling. Do it ten times in one direction and ten times in the other. Repeat with the left leg. Then, try with both legs, simultaneously, moving them *in tandem*. Then, join both legs and perform this posture with both legs moving jointly. During the whole practice breathing should be normal.

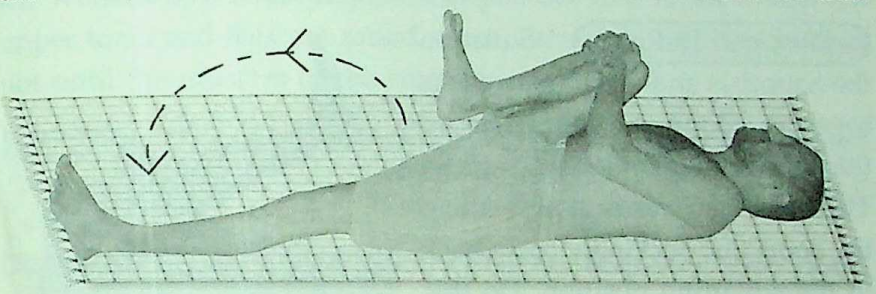


Cycling

Take care to keep the head and body touching the floor. Do not raise them. After each practice, lie in *śavāsana* (corpse pose) and allow the breath to come back to normal.

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Leg bending Lie on the back. Bend the right leg and bring the knee to the chest. Clasp the fingers of both hands and position them on the right knee. Exhale and expel the air completely from the lungs. Perform *bāhya kumbhaka*, i.e., hold the breath out and do not breathe in. This is called Retention. Then, lift your right leg and hold it by your clasped hand and pull the right knee with the hands, till it touches the nose. You can raise the head for this.

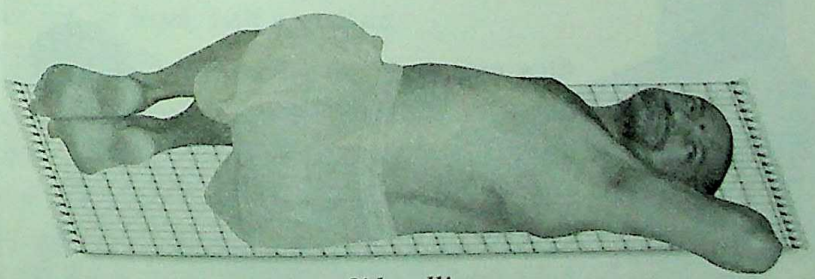


Leg bending

Then inhaling deeply, bring the head down to the floor and straighten the leg till it rests on the floor. Let the body relax. Do this ten times. Repeat with the left leg. Next, perform with both legs together. This is also called as *pūrṇa pavanamuktāsana*.

Benefits This posture remedies stomach problems and constipation.

Side rolling Lie on the back. Then bend both the legs from the knees and bring the knees to touch the chest. Clasp the fingers of the hands together and position them behind the head. The elbows should touch the floor. Then, roll sideways. Let the knees

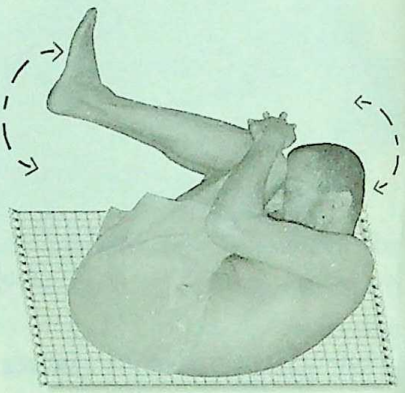


Side rolling

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touch the floor but not the feet or toes. Keep the upper torso straight and twist from the waist when rolling sideways. Also keep the elbows touching the floor. When you roll towards your right, roll your head towards the left within the clasped hands. Do this ten times, on each side. During this practice, when you are rolling towards anyside, exhale, and when you are coming (rolling) back to original position inhale or do with normal breathing.

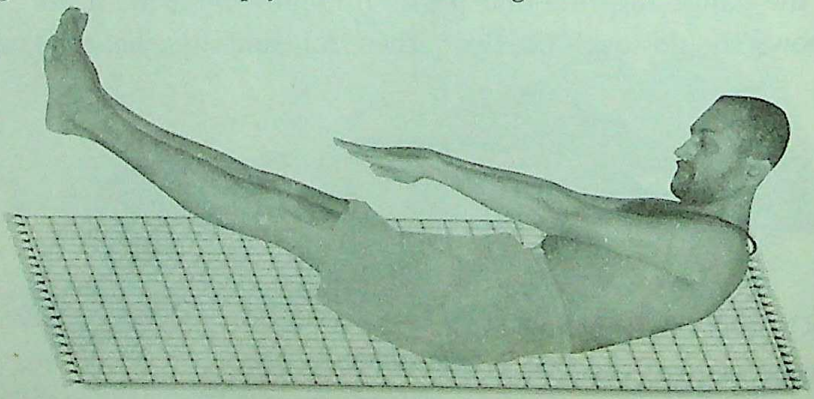
Rock and Rolling Squat on the haunches and keep the two legs together. Wrap the arms around the folded legs and hold tightly. Then roll backwards slowly along the spine and rockingly come back to the squatting position. Do this ten times.



Rock and rolling

Precautions Do not try this posture on the bare floor or very thin mat or singly folded blanket. Practise on a blanket that has been folded many times. This shall ensure a massage of the back, waist and the buttocks. When rolling backwards, do not let the head touch the floor. Those suffering from spinal problems must not perform this posture.

Naukāsana (boat pose) Lie on the back keeping the legs together. Inhale deeply and raise the legs, hands, head and the



Naukāsana (boat pose)

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upper torso as if you are trying to touch the toes of the feet with the fingers of the hand. Do not raise the head more than one foot from the floor. Keep the arms and the toes at the same level so that you could look along the arms and fix your eyes on the toes. Hold your breath and remain in this position for as long as you can. After that, exhale and come back to the lying position. Let the whole body relax. Repeat this posture five times. When the upper torso and legs are raised, try to remain in that position but not until the muscles of the stomach start to quiver.

Benefits This posture is beneficial for those suffering from weak nerves and tension.

During all the above-said posture practice, keep your eyes closed and meditate on the *maṇipūra cakra*.

PAVANAMUKTĀSANA — PART III (NON-RHEUMATIC EYE POSTURES)

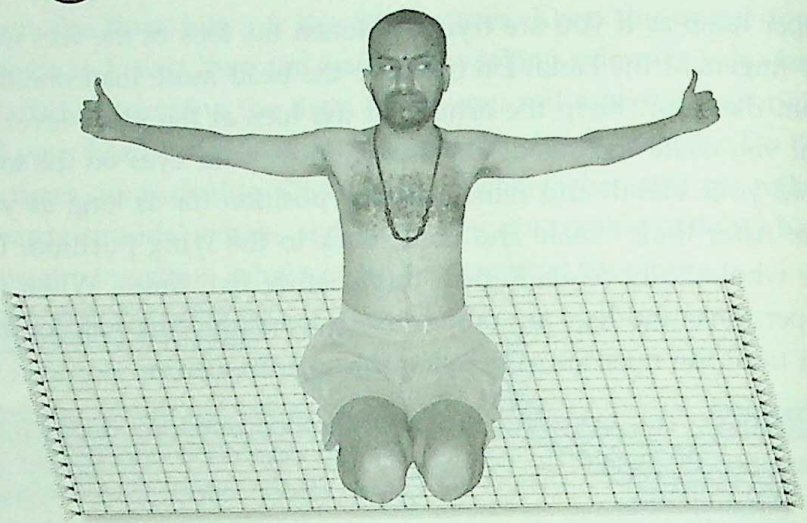
Eyesight is a beautiful and amazing boon from the nature, because it is, through it, that one has maximum experience and gain of knowledge. Hence, it is desirable for everyone to keep the eyes healthy and problem-free. One can practise, the following postures any time, but it is best to practise in a green place, early morning or in the evening. After every practice, close the eyes for, at least, half a minute.



Palming

Palming Sit facing the rising sun with your eyes closed. Rub the palms together vigorously till you feel the heat. Immediately place the palms over the eyes. Feel the heat and energy from the hands being transmitted to the eyes. When the heat has dissipated

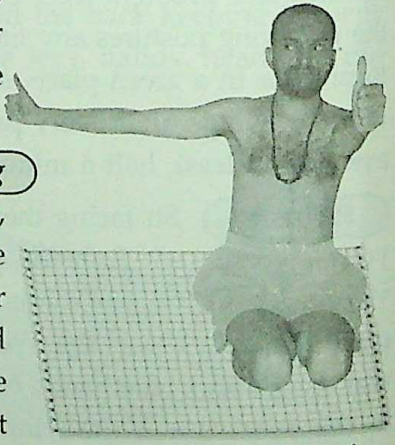
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Sideways viewing

remove the palms, but, keep the eyes closed. Repeat three to five times.

Sideways viewing Sit in any meditative posture. Extend the arms on both sides at shoulder level. Keep the thumbs pointed upwards. Then, without moving the head, turn and focus your eyes on the left thumb, then, bring them to focus on the third eye, i.e., eyebrow centre. Next, the right thumb and, then, again on the third eye, i.e., eyebrow centre. Repeat this entire sequence fifteen to twenty times. After this, close your eyes and rest them for some time. Again, repeat the cycle three to five times.

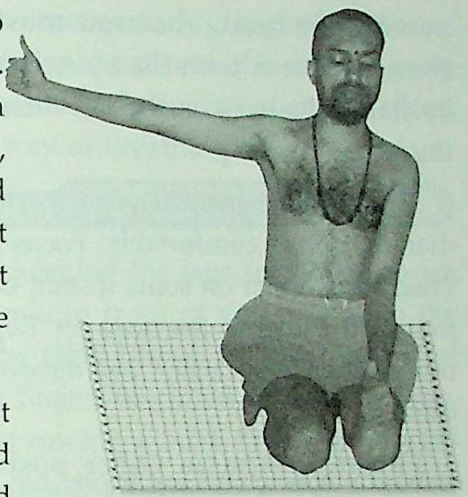


Front and sideways viewing

Front and sideways viewing Sitting in a meditative posture, stretch the left arm forward and the right hand sideways both at shoulder level. Keep both the thumbs pointed upwards. Then without moving the head move the eyes from the left

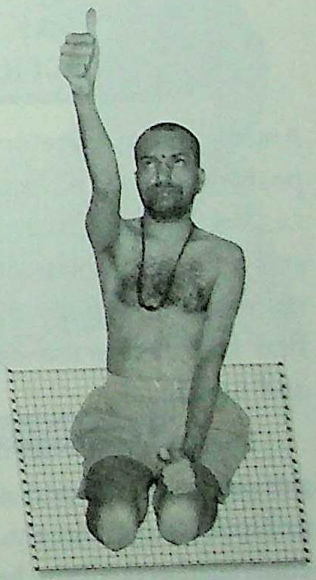
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thumb to the right thumb. Do this for fifteen to twenty times. Rest the eyes by closing them for half a minute and, then, stretch the right hand forward and the left, sideways. Repeat fifteen to twenty times. Repeat the entire sequence three to five times.



Rotational viewing

Rotational viewing Sit in *vajrāsana*, i.e., the diamond pose with the legs together and bent at the knees with the buttocks resting on the heels. Keeping the arms straight, place the left fist on the left knee and the right fist on the right knee. Keeping the right arm stretched straight ahead and the right thumb pointing upwards move the thumb and the fist in a circle anticlockwise. While doing this, do not move the head and keep the eyes focused on the right thumb. In other words, the eyes must move with the moving thumb. Repeat this practice, clockwise and anticlockwise, five times each. Also repeat with left thumb. After the practice, shut the eyes for atleast half a minute and allow them to rest.



Up and down viewing

Up and down viewing Sit in *vajrāsana*, i.e., the diamond pose and place both fists on the knees keeping the arms straight. The thumbs must be pointed upwards. Keeping the eyes fixed on the right thumb, raise the right arm. Take it to the highest level, till you can keep the eyes on the thumb without

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moving the head. The arms must remain straight. Then, bring the arms down with the eyes, constantly, on the thumb. Repeat by fixing the eyes on the left thumb. Repeat ten times with each thumb and relax.

Distant and near viewing Sit in the *vajrāsana*, i.e., the diamond pose, comfortably. Focus the eyes on the tip of the nose. Then focus them on some distant object without moving the head. Return the eyes to the nose tip. Repeat the cycle fifteen to twenty times. After the practice, rest the eyes for half a minute by shutting them.

Further practices Other postures and practices, that are beneficial for the eyes and that shall be elucidated later, in the book, are as follows: *Śīrṣāsana, sarvāṅgāsana, sūrya namaskāra, sūryabhedī prāṇāyāma, neti kriyā* (already explained) and *trāṭaka*.

It is beneficial to wash the eyes, daily, first, with self-urine and, then, with fresh water. All these practices must be practised under the guidance of an expert Yoga instructor.

ŚAKTIBANDHA ĀSANAS (ENERGY LOCK POSTURES)

Among the preparatory postures along with the non-rheumatic posture series, i.e., *pavanamuktāsana*, the Energy Lock Postures, i.e., *śakti bandha āsana*s are also important. For those who have stiff muscles or joints or the practitioners of Yoga, who experience stiffness in the body due to eating habits or other reasons, shall find *śakti bandha āsana*s, i.e., energy lock postures very effective and beneficial.

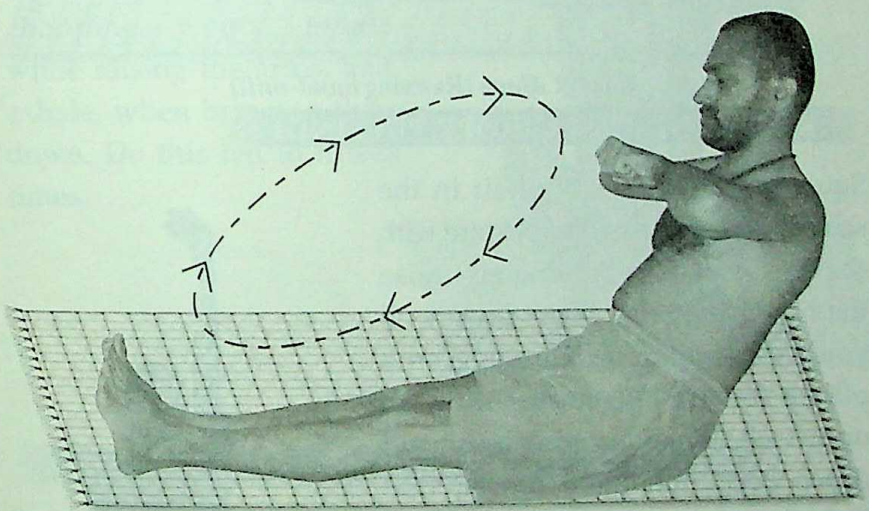
Energy, in the form of the subtle vital force, i.e., *prāṇa*, is present in every part of the body. If the energy keeps flowing unhindered and freely, then, the toxic elements of the body are eliminated and all the body functions continue in a proper manner, smoothly. Specially, the ductless glandular system remains

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balanced. The *śakti bandha*, i.e., energy lock group of postures, are effective in maintaining a balance between the various body functions and for preparing the body for higher yogic practices, like *prāṇāyāma*, i.e., the yogic way of breathing.

NAUKĀ SAÑCĀLANA (BOAT ROWING)

Sit on the floor on a mat and keeping the legs together, stretch them forward. Hold your hands in front of you and keep the fingers opened. Now, hold the right thumb by your left hand fingers locking it and the right fingers be closed, as shown. Then, move the body as if you were rowing a boat. Bending forward and backward as much as you can, move the hands as if you were at the oars. Do this ten times in both directions. Perform slowly. Exhale, while bending forward, and, inhale, while leaning backward.



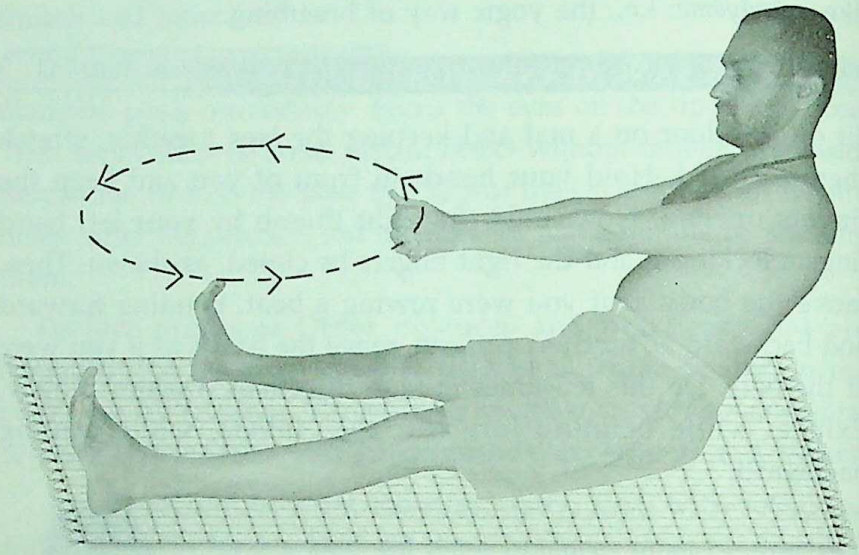
Naukā Sañcālana

CAKKĪ CĀLANA (RUNNING HAND-MILL)

Sit in the same way as in the previous posture but keep the feet two feet apart. Keep the hands clasped as if holding the vertical handle of the mill. Then, bending, forward and back-ward, move the hands in horizontal circles without bending the hands from

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the elbows, as if you are working at the hand mill. Breathe out, when bending forward and, breathe in, when bending backwards. Do this ten times in both directions.



Cakkī Cālana (*Running hand-mill*)

RASSĪ KHĪṄCANĀ (ROPE PULLING)

Squat on the haunches or sit in the same way as in the earlier posture with the legs, together. Alternately, raise the hands and bring them down as if you were pulling a rope hung on a pulley for drawing water from an open well. When bringing one hand down keep that hand tensed fist-locked as if drawing water by a rope from a well during which the other hand will be risen up and relaxed with fist open. Now, when raising the hand, relax the muscles and open the fist and, at the same time, when bringing the other hand down, clench



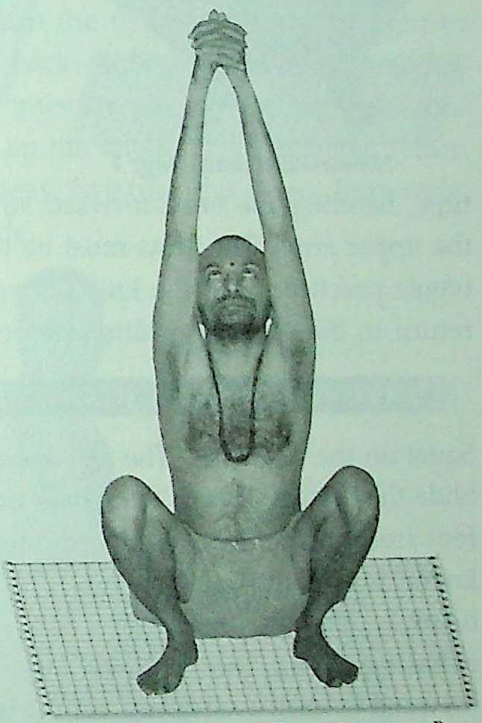
Rassī Khīṅcanā (*Rope Pulling*)

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the fist and tense the muscles. In this way, both the hands will be moving, up and down, simultaneously. When one will be up, the other will be down. Keep the arms straight during the whole practice. Do this for, at least, five minutes. Breathe normally throughout.

LAKAḌĪ KĀṬANĀ (CHOPPING WOOD)

Keeping the feet about a foot apart squat on the haunches. Stretch the arms between the knees keeping them straight and with the hands clasped as if holding an axe. Without bending the arms raise them and bring them down as if chopping wood. Inhale, while raising the arms, and, exhale, when bringing them down. Do this ten to fifteen times.

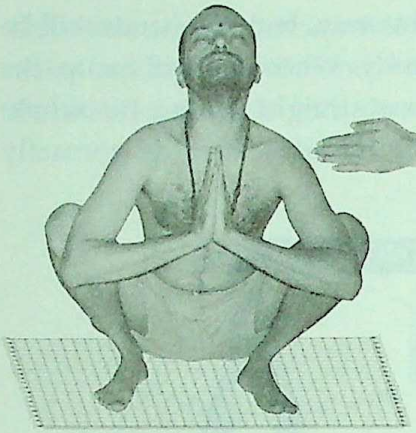


Lakaḍī Kāṭanā (Chopping wood)

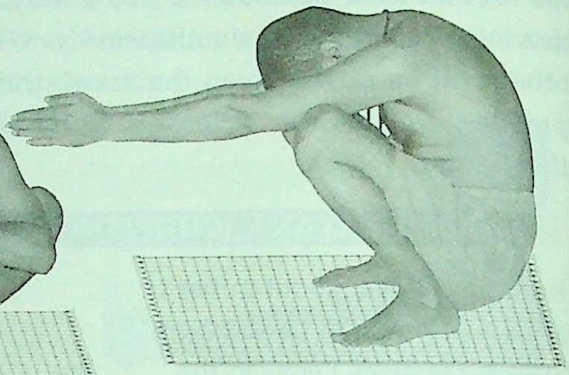
NAMASKĀRĀSANA (OBEISANCE POSTURE)

Squat as before on the haunches with the knees apart. Join the palms in a posture of *namaskāra*, i.e., obeisance. Then, bending the head a bit backwards, look skywards. The arms should be bent at the elbows and the palms must be near the chest. Keep the arms between the legs. Now pushing the elbows into the knees from the inside, inhale deeply. After retaining the breath, for some time, exhale, slowly, and, extend the arms forward, at the same

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Namaskārāsana-stage 1

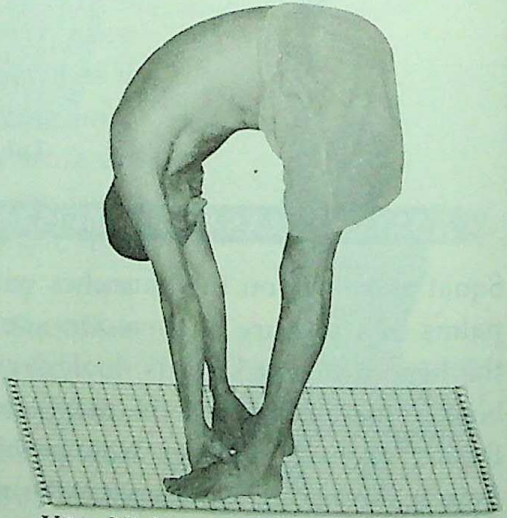


Namaskārāsana-stage 2 (Obeisance Posture)

time, bending the head forward so that the head rests between the upper arms. The arms must be touching the knees during the whole practice. Push the knees inwards to press the arms. Then, return to the starting position. Repeat the cycle ten times.

VĀYU NIṢKĀSANA (GAS RELEASE POSTURE)

Squat on the haunches. The feet should be, at least, one feet apart. Slide the fingers of both the hands under the sole of the respective foot from inside. In other words, the arms must be between the knees. Inhale and raise the head. Then, slowly, exhaling, bend the head forward and without removing the fingers from under the soles, try to stand. In other words, try to straighten the legs with the upper torso bent forward. Remain in this position for, sometime, performing *bāhya kumbhaka*, i.e., without



Vāyu Niṣkāsana (Gas release posture)

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breathing in, external retention. Then, return to the original position. Repeat this cycle ten times. Perform this practice without exerting, in any way.

UDARĀKARṢAṆA ĀSANA (ABDOMINAL MASSAGE POSTURE)

Squat on the haunches with the feet two feet apart and the palms placed on the knees. Then, turn the upper torso to the right to the maximum and try to look backwards over the right shoulder. In this position, the left knee must be placed over the right foot while the palms must remain on the knees. Then, inhaling, return to the original position. Repeat, twisting the torso, leftwards. Perform ten times on each side.



Udarākarṣaṇa Āsana (Abdominal massage posture)

Benefits This posture is very beneficial as it massages the digestive organs and the muscles of the stomach. It helps in remedying the problem of indigestion.

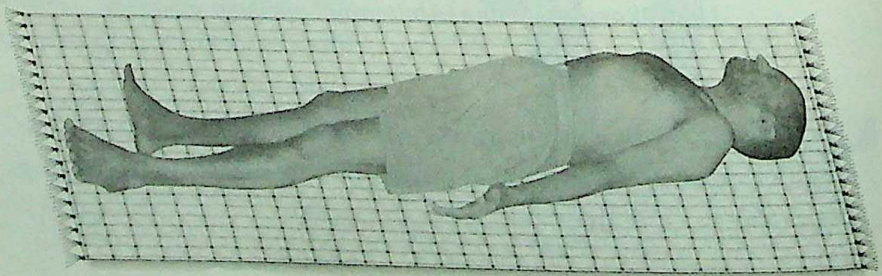
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MEDITATIVE POSTURES (DHYĀNĀSANA)

For higher yogic practice of *dhyāna*, i.e., meditation, the mind and the body have to be prepared because one has to sit still for a long time in meditation. For this, one should practice the relaxation postures and the meditative postures. *Śithilīkaraṇa āsanas* or the relaxation postures, which includes *śavāsana, advāsana, makarāsana, jyeṣṭikāsana, matsyākrīḍāsana*, etc. The *āsanas*, that precede meditation, include half butterfly, full butterfly, crow walk, *paśu-viśrāmāsana*, etc. The meditative postures or the *dhyāna āsanas* include *padmāsana, ardhasiddhāsana, siddhāsana, siddha yoni āsana, sukhāsana, vajrāsana*, etc. Some of the most important among these are being elucidated here.

ŚITHLĪKARAṆĀSANA (RELAXATION POSTURES SERIES)

***Śavāsana* (*Corpse pose*)** Lie on the back. Keep the arms on the sides with the palms open and facing upwards. Keep the feet about one feet apart and completely relaxed. The eyes should be closed and the whole body relaxed. No body part should move. The breathing should remain normal. Be concentrate on the breathing and keep counting the breaths. Do this till the body is fully relaxed.



Śavāsana (*Corpse pose*)

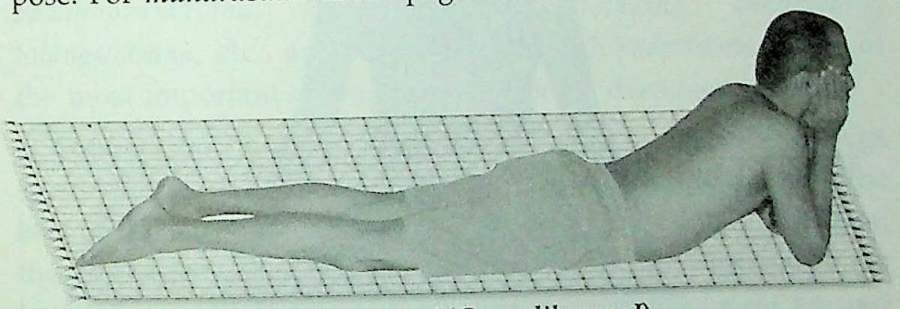
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***Advāsana* (Non-dual pose)** Lie on the stomach. Keep the arms touching the sides with the open palms facing upwards. Alternatively, one can keep the arms stretched over the head with the upper arms touching the ears and with the palms downwards. Rest of the steps are similar to *śavāsana*, i.e., the corpse pose.



Advāsana (*Non-dual pose*)

***Makarāsana* I (*Crocodile Pose I*)** Lie on the stomach. Fold the arms and position the elbows on the floor and place the chin in the cup of the palms. In this position, the head and shoulders shall be raised. Rest of the steps are similar to *śavāsana*, the corpse pose. For *makarāsana* II see page 140.



Makarāsana I (*Crocodile pose I*)

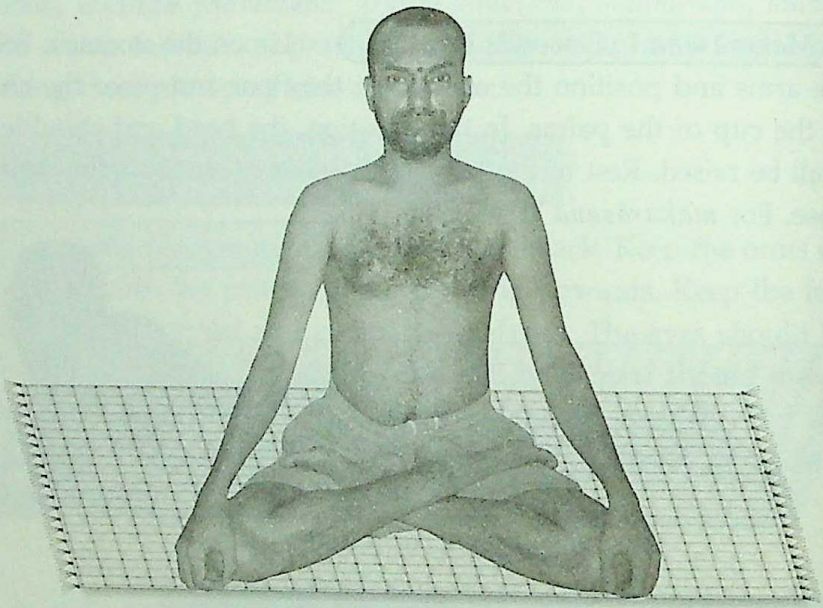
DHYĀNAPŪRVĀSANA (PRE-MEDITATION POSTURES SERIES)

1. *Half-butterfly* — This posture has already been described in the previous pages under the head — Preparative postures — Non-rheumatizing postures — Non-rheumatizing leg postures practise number 8. See page 66.
2. *Full butterfly* — See page 67 practise 10
3. *Crow walk* — See page 68 practise 11

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DHYĀNĀSANA (MEDITATIVE POSTURES)

Padmāsana (Lotus Pose) Sit with the legs spread forward. Bend the right leg from the knee and place the right foot on the left thigh in a manner that the heel touches the pelvic region. The sole of the foot must face upwards. Next bend the left leg and place the left foot on the right thigh. Then fold the fingers in *jñāna-mudrā* or *cin-mudrā*, see chapter 5 the Science of Gestures and place the back of the palms on the knees or place them relaxed as shown. Keep the back and the neck straight upright. Concentrate on the third eye, i.e., *ājñā cakra*. Keep the eyes closed.



Padmāsana (*Lotus pose*)

Sit rock still and each day increase the time you sit in this posture until you can comfortably remain in this position for three hours. Without mastering this posture, one cannot hope to succeed in *prāṇāyāma* (breath control) practices and meditation.

Benefits The name of the posture itself suggests the benefits of this posture. In Sanskrit, *padma* means a lotus. A lotus rises in mud and filth but it remains untainted by the filth around it. Similarly,

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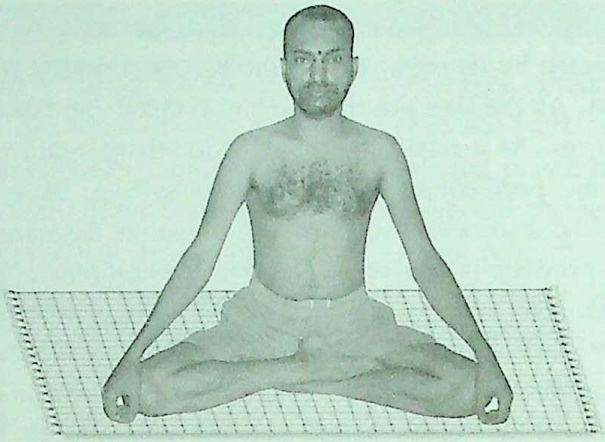
by practising this posture, an aspirant continues to be in this world but unaffected by its evils. This is the best posture for *dhyāna*, i.e., meditation. As the legs are in a bound position the blood flow to them reduces. As a result, the blood flow in the brain rises. This leads to the purification of the nervous system. Many physical problems like sciatica and rheumatism, are cured. Also, through this posture a pressure is exerted on the *sarasvatī nāḍī* (one of the subtle energy channels) and this, in turn, leads to flow of *prāṇa* (the vital energy) into the *suṣumnā nāḍī*, i.e., the channel of *kuṇḍalinī* awakening. As a result, meditation becomes easier. This posture also conserves energy, makes the senses poised and prevents outflow of energy from the finger ends and toe ends. It also makes the digestion strong and the mind concentrated.

Further practices — Many postures like *ardhapadmāsana, vīrāsana, parvatāsana, samāsana, kārmukāsana, utthiṭa padmāsana, baddhapadmāsana, ūrdhvapadmāsana, lolāsana, kukuṭāsana, tolāṅgulāsana*, etc., are performed through *padmāsana*. Some of the most important among these are being discussed ahead.

Siddhāsana (Accomplished Sage's Pose) Sit with the legs spread forward. Fold the left leg from the knee and position the heel of the left foot in such a way that it presses on the perineum, the region between the anus and the sex-organs. The sole of the left foot must be touching the right thigh. Fold the right leg and place the right heel pressing into the root of the genitals or the pubic bone. The right ankle must be positioned over the left ankle. Position the toes of the left foot between the right thigh and calf muscles. Close the eyes and with the fingers perform *jñāna* or *cin-mudrā*. Concentrate on the *ājñā cakra*, i.e., the third eye (the eyebrow centre).

Only men should perform this posture. The alternative for women is *siddha yoni āsana* accomplished virgin's posture. In it, the right leg is folded and the right heel presses into the middle

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Siddhāsana (Accomplished sage's pose)

of the vagina (on the cervix). The left leg is folded and the left heel is pressed on the top of the vagina (the pubic bone).

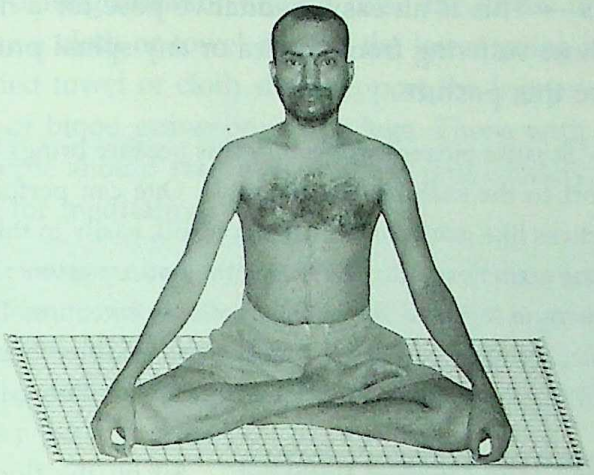
Precautions — Those who suffer from sciatica or problem in the lower spine should not practice this posture.

Benefits In Yoga *brahmacarya*, i.e., celibacy is very important. Through this posture, one can master *brahmacarya*, i.e., celibacy. It removes all problems related to *vīrya*, i.e., semen virile. This posture transforms the semen virile into *ojas*, i.e., vital energy and channellizes the vital energy upwards forcing the awakening of *kuṇḍalinī*, the dormant energy. It makes the mind stable. In this position, the seminal channels get relaxed and, as a result, one is able to perform *mūla bandha* and *vajroli mudrā* effortlessly. Thus, there is a balance and harmony between the three energies in the body, i.e., emotional, mental and physical. One is easily able to enter into the meditative state.

Ardha siddhāsana half-accomplished sage's pose The first few steps are similar to *siddhāsana* except that the right leg is folded and the right foot is placed over the left thigh.

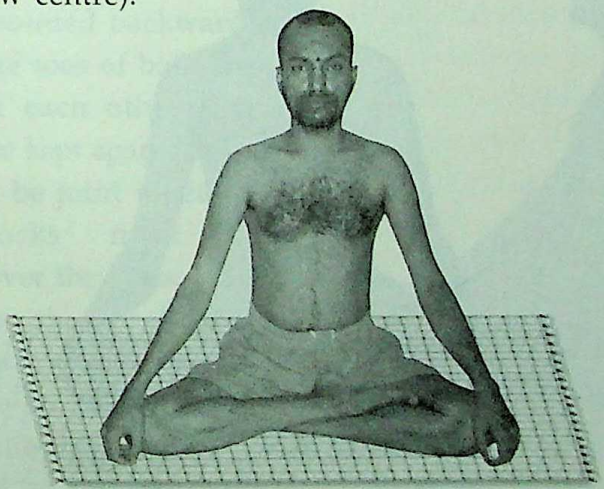
Further practices — Many postures like *guptāsana, vīryāsana, baddhayonyāsana, kṣemāsana, sthirāsana, muktāsana*, etc., are performed through *siddhāsana*.

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Ardha siddhāsana — Half-accomplished sage's pose

Svastikāsana (Auspicious pose) Sit on the floor with the legs stretched forward. Fold the left leg and place the left foot against the inner right thigh. Fold the right leg over the left leg and position the toes of the right foot between the thigh and calf muscles of the left leg. Or keep the toes of both feet free as shown in the picture. With the fingers of the hands perform *jñāna* or *cin-mudrā* and position the hands on the knees. Keep the spine and neck straight. Concentrate on the *ājñā cakra*, i.e., third eye (the eyebrow centre).



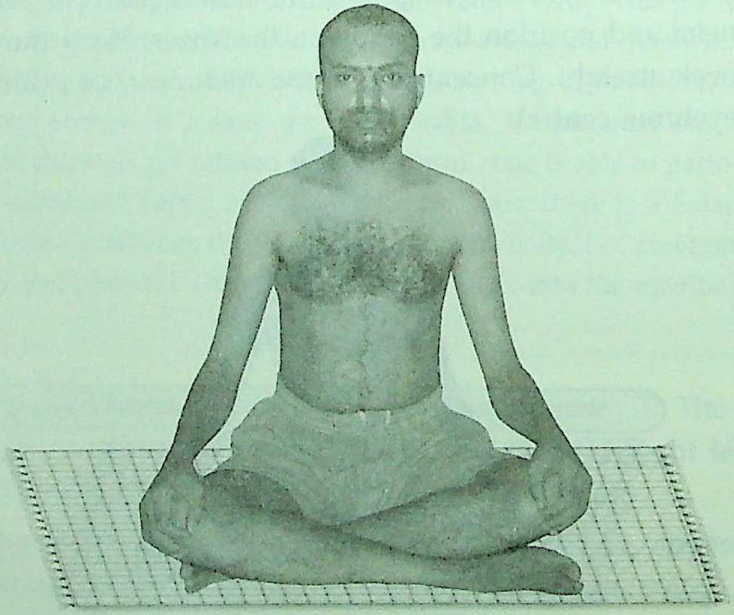
Svastikāsana (*Auspicious pose*)

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Precautions — This is an easy meditative pose for a new initiate in Yoga. Those suffering from sciatica or any spinal problem must not practice this posture.

Benefits *Svastika* means auspicious. This posture brings happiness and comfort to the *sādhaka* (the aspirant). One can perform higher yogic practices like *prāṇāyāma* (breath control), easily in this posture. This posture activates and rejuvenates the entire nervous system. It remedies pain in legs and the problem of over-sweating. It is a very comfortable sitting posture for *mantra japa*-syllable chanting and, in this position, one can sit for a long time without any discomfort.

Sukhāsana (The Comfort Pose) Sit on the floor with the legs stretched forward. Fold the right leg and position the right foot under the left thigh. Then fold the left leg and place the left foot under the right thigh. With the fingers of the hand being kept in *jñāna* or *cin-mudrā* and place the hands on the knees. Keep the neck and spine straight. Concentrate on the *ājñā cakra* (the third eye), i.e., eyebrow centre. Those who wish to sit in this



Sukhāsana (*Comfort pose*)

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posture for a long duration should raise the knees towards the chest and tie a cloth or towel around the knees going around the back. The tied towel or cloth shall support the legs and keep the circulation of blood going on in the legs. Those with rigid legs and old people should start this practice, immediately, to enable themselves for meditation.

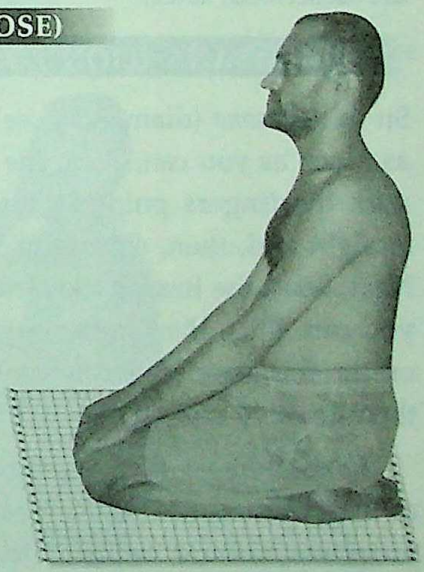
Benefits *Sukha* means comfort and as the name suggests this posture is very comfortable and one can sit in this position for a long time without feeling tired or tense, thus bringing peace to the mind, soul and the body. The body also becomes prepared for other meditative poses. It harmonizes the breathing process.

Further practice — Other different variations of this *āsana* (posture) are *hastapāda-baddhāsana* (called *pavanamuktāsana* by some), *vāmapāda-hastabaddhāsana, dakṣiṇapāda-hastabaddhāsana, bhairavāsana*. These postures are easy for the beginners.

POSTURES DONE IN SEATED POSITION

VAJRĀSANA (DIAMOND POSE)

Sit on the knees. The feet should be pointed backwards and the large toes of both feet must touch each other. The heels must be kept apart but the knees must be joint together. The buttocks must be positioned over the heels. Place the palms on the knees. Keep the spine and the neck straight and the body relaxed. The breathing should be normal. Concentrate on the *ājñā cakra*



Vajrāsana (Diamond pose)

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(the third eye — the eyebrow centre).

This posture should be practised for fifteen minutes before meals for losing weight. Those with weak digestion and even those who are healthy should perform this posture for fifteen to thirty minutes after meals.

Benefits *Vajra* is the name of a channel (nerve=*nāḍī*) that transmits the vital energy and also of diamond. This channel is related to the sex-organs and the urinary system. Thus, this posture effects the womb, intestines, etc., in a direct way. This posture also affects the *kanda* (navel region), from where 72000 *nāḍī*s originate. Hence, the benefits derived from this posture are countless. Problems of the stomach, sciatica, gas, leg pain, sexual disorders and urinary disorders are remedied through this posture. As per the name diamond pose, this posture makes the semen virile very strong like diamond.

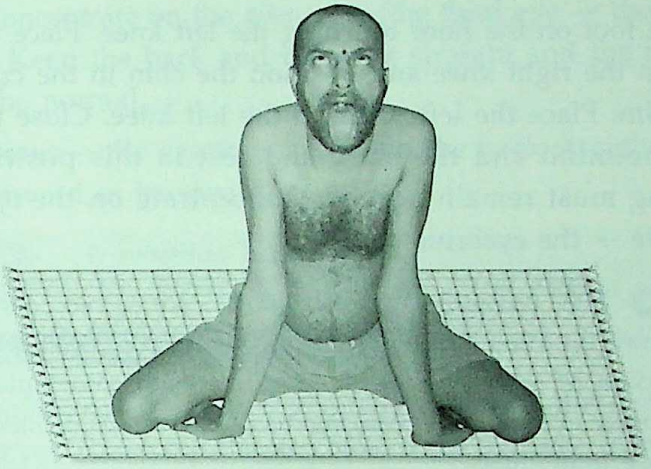
Further practice — *Maṇḍūkāsana, ardha-śavāsana supta-vajrāsana, pādādirāsana, parvatāsana, ānanda-madirāsana, aṅguṣṭhāsana* are variations of *vajrāsana*. Some of these postures are described, later.

SIṀHĀSANA (LION POSE)

Sit in *vajrāsana* (diamond pose). Separate the knees on both sides as much as you can. Place the palms on the floor in front of you with the fingers pointing towards your body. Keep the arms straight and, then, shift your weight on them bending forward. Next, bend the head backwards and open the mouth as much as you can. Push the tongue out. The eyes should be concentrated on the third eye (eyebrow centre). Breathe through the nose and then exhaling slowly roar like a lion.

One can move the tongue right and left while exhaling. Repeat, at least, ten times. Those practising this posture for remedial purposes should repeat fifteen to thirty times. One must concentrate the mind on the *viśuddhi cakra*.

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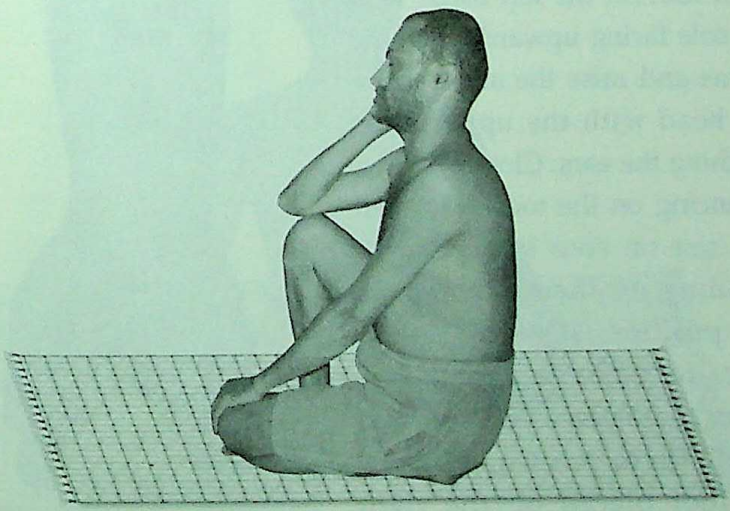


Siṁhāsana (*Lion pose*)

Benefits This posture works wonders for those suffering from problems of the ear, nose, throat and mouth and those who stammer. This posture is also called *sarva-rogahara*, i.e., one that banishes all diseases. Hence, even healthy people should practice it regularly to prevent diseases.

VĪRĀSANA (HERO'S POSE)

Sit in *vājrāsana* (the diamond pose). Raise the right knee and place



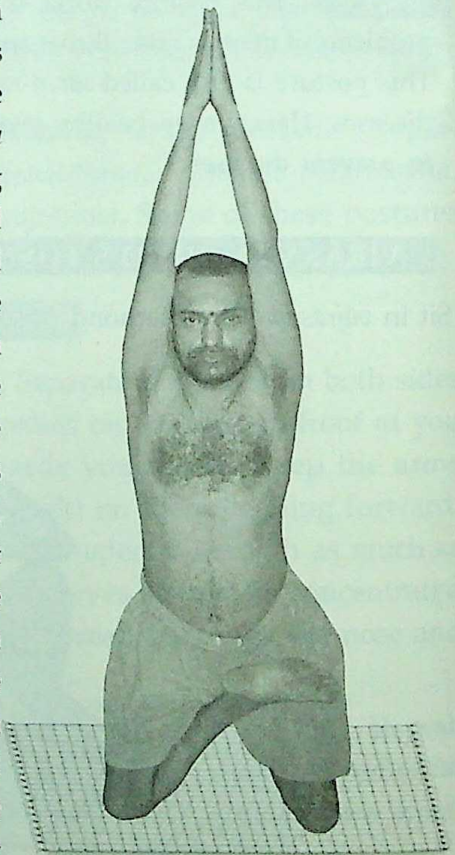
Vīrāsana (*Hero's pose*)

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the right foot on the floor touching the left knee. Place the right elbow on the right knee and position the chin in the cup of the right palm. Place the left palm on the left knee. Close the eyes. Relax the mind and the body and rest in this position. The breathing must remain normal. Concentrate on the *ājñā cakra* (third eye — the eyebrow centre).

Benefits This posture is very beneficial for a new initiate to concentrate the mind and for *dhāraṇā*, fixing mind through *pratyāhāra* introversion of senses. It is also good for deep contemplation. It brings peace of mind and relaxation to tired students, fickle women and tense individuals.

Alternative pose — One can practise *vīrāsana* (the hero's pose) through an alternative method, too. Sit in *vajrāsana* (the diamond pose). Now bring your right leg in front of you and stretch it. Raise the right leg and folding from knee place the right foot on the left thigh with the sole facing upwards. Join the palms and raise the arms above the head with the upper arms touching the ears. Close the eyes. Balancing on the toes of the left foot rise on your knees and be standing on them. Remain in this position, standing on the knees for some time and then return to *vajrāsana* (the diamond pose). Then, practise with the left foot placed on the right



Vīrāsana — II

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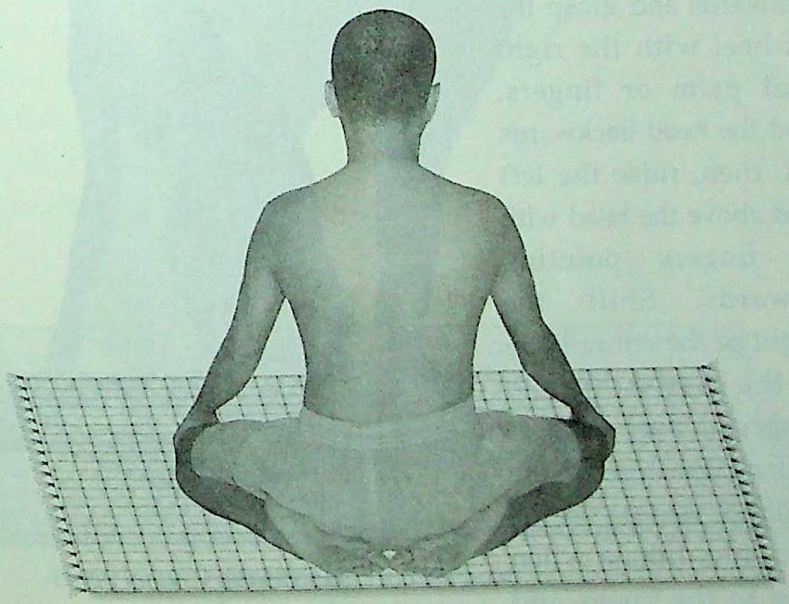
thigh. Concentrate on the *ājña cakra* (the third eye — the eyebrow centre). Keep the back and the neck straight and the breathing should be normal.

Precautions — Be cautious and keep the back straight. Do not bend forward or backward.

Benefits It remedies backache.

BHADRĀSANA (GENTLE POSE)

Sit in *vajrāsana* (the diamond pose). Separate the knees as far apart as you can. Keep the feet behind the buttocks with the soles facing upwards and the upper part of the feet touching the floor. The buttocks must be resting on the floor. Without stressing push the knees further apart. Place the palms on the knees. Let the body and mind relax and concentrate your eyes on the nose tip. The mind should be concentrated on the *ājñā cakra* or *svādhiṣṭhāna cakra*. Breathing should remain normal. Keep the neck and back straight.



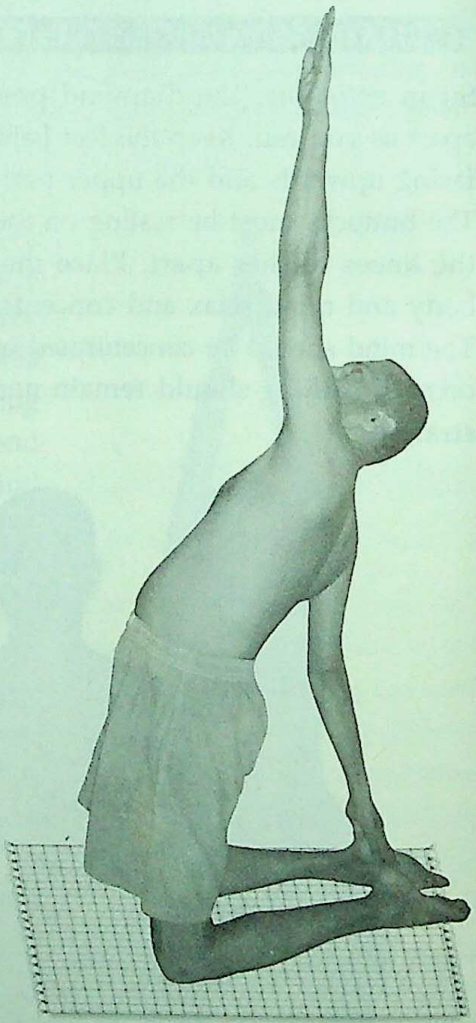
***Bhadrāsana* (Gentle pose)**

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Benefits This posture is very helpful in spiritual ends because the *kuṇḍalinī* power that lies recumbent in the *mūlādhāra cakra* is activated by this practice. As far as physical benefits are concerned this posture removes all toxins that are produced in the body. As a result, the body becomes disease-free.

UṢṬRĀSANA (CAMEL POSE)

Practice I — Sit in *vajrāsana* (the diamond pose). Stand on the knees with the knees about two feet apart. The feet also must be two feet apart. Let the upper surface of the feet touch the floor or balance on the toes. Twisting the upper torso to the right, bend backwards and grasp the left heel with the right hand palm or fingers. Bend the head backwards and, then, raise the left hand above the head with the fingers pointing skywards. Shift the weight of the entire body on the left heel and remain still. Keep the eyes fixed on the tips of the left hand. Repeat on the other side. Inhale when rising to the knees and

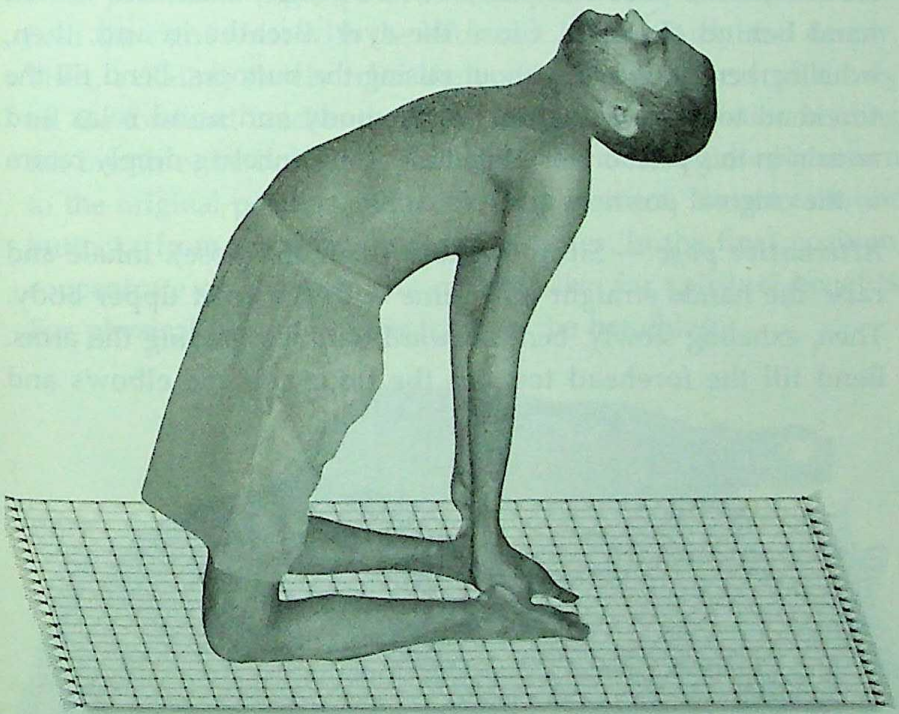


Uṣṭrāsana (*Camel pose*)

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exhale when twisting sideways. Hold the breath out when in the final position. Breathe in when returning to the original position. Concentrate on the spinal column and particularly the *maṇipūra cakra*.

Practice II — Sit in *vajrāsana* (the diamond pose). Keep the knees two feet apart but the feet joined or apart as shown. Raise the body on your knees and balance yourself on the toes and knees. Bend the upper body backwards and place the palms on the respective heel. Breathe in when bending backwards. Remain in this final position breathing in and out, normally. Breathe in deeply and, then, breathing out, slowly, return to *vajrāsana*. In the final position, push the stomach out as much as you can and let the weight of the upper body rest on the heels through your hands.



Uṣṭrāsana, another pose

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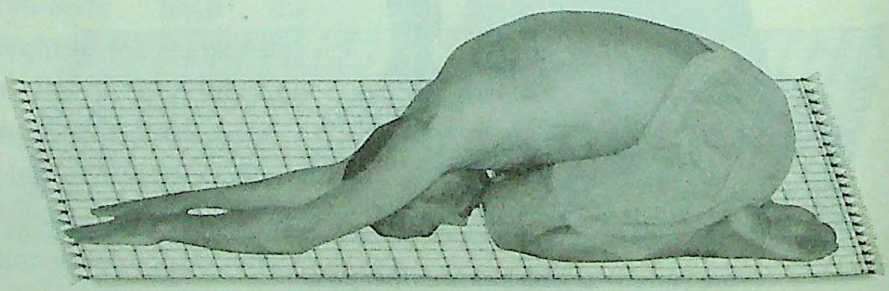
Remain in the final position for one to three minutes. Repeat two to three times. For spiritual benefits of this posture, concentrate on the *viśuddhi* or *anāhata cakra*. One can benefit even more from this posture if it is practised after the postures in which one has to bend forward.

Benefits It remedies several spinal problems like slip disc, spondylitis, sciatica, etc. It increases the air retention capacity of the lungs. It helps shed extra fat from thigh, stomach and chest. It remedies heart problems of all and especially menstrual problems in women. It is also beneficial for digestive, excretory and reproductive systems.

ŚAŚĀṄKHĀSANA (MOON POSE)

Sit in *vajrāsana* (diamond pose). Hold the right wrist with the left hand behind the back. Close the eyes. Breathe in and, then, exhaling bend forward without raising the buttocks. Bend till the forehead touches the floor. Let the body and mind relax and remain in this position for some time. Then, inhaling deeply return to the original position.

Alternative pose — Sit in *vajrāsana* (diamond pose). Inhale and raise the hands straight up in line with the erect upper body. Then, exhaling slowly, bend forward without bending the arms. Bend till the forehead touches the floor and the elbows and



Śaśāṅkhāsana (*Moon pose*)

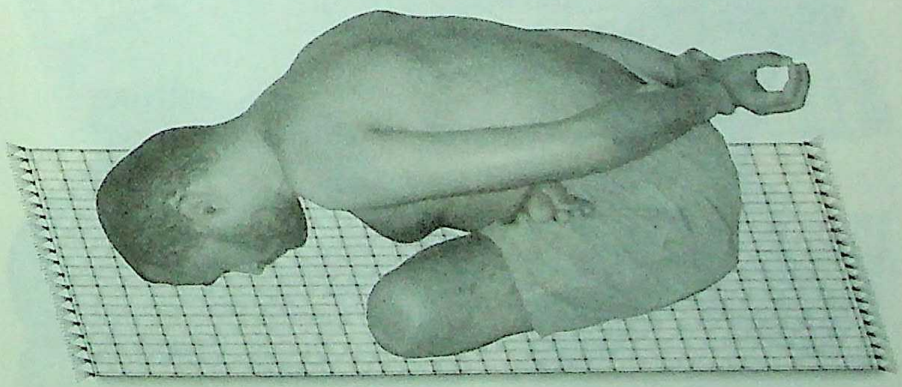
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forearms too rest on the floor. Remain in this position holding the breath or breathing normally. Next, inhaling deeply return to the original position. Rest for a minute and then repeat. Do so five-six times.

Benefits While in the final position, concentrate on the *mūlādhāra cakra* or the *svadhiṣṭhāna* or *maṇipūra cakra*. It tones the reproductive organs and removes sexual problems. It relaxes the sciatica nerves and balances the functioning of the adrenal glands. It tones the muscles of the hips and buttocks. It rejuvenates the digestive system. It is also helpful in controlling asthma. It also cures emotional imbalance and helps curb one's anger.

YOGA-MUDRĀSANA (PSYCHIC POSE)

Sit in *padmāsana* (lotus pose) and close the eyes. Behind the back hold the right wrist with the left hand. Inhale slowly and deeply. Then, exhaling slowly relax the body and bend forward slowly till the forehead touches the floor. Remain in this position holding the breath or be breathing normally. Next inhaling deeply return to the original position. When bending forward, do not raise the buttocks from the floor. Repeat five times. In the final position, concentrate on the *maṇipūra* or *ājñā cakra* for spiritual benefits. For physical benefits concentrate on the breathing.



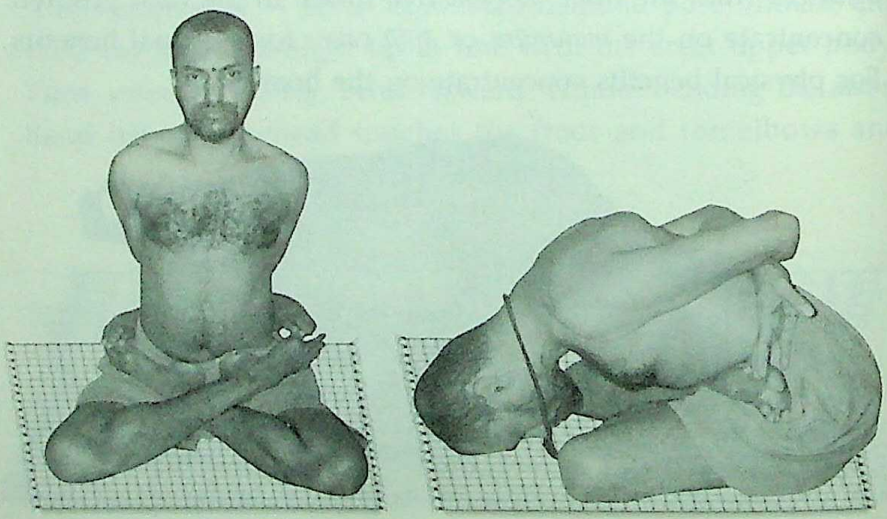
Yoga-mudrāsana (Psychic pose)

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Benefits It massages the stomach and other organs located in the abdomen region. It also ends constipation. It increases the suppleness of the spinal nerves. It also helps in the balanced activation of the *suṣumnā* channel and *maṇipūra cakra*. It removes all stomach ailments. It also prevents the shrinking or enlargement of the prostrate gland. It helps reduce obesity. It is a very good posture for development of the brain.

BADDHA-PADMtSANA (LOCKED LOTUS POSE)

Sit in *padmāsana* (lotus pose). From the back, hold the right big toe by the right hand and then crossing the left hand over the right hand hold the left big toe by the left hand. If the practitioner exhales and bends a bit forward, it will be easy to get hold of the toes. Next, bend forward and touch the forehead to the floor. Remain in the final position for some time, breathing normally. Inhaling deeply, return to the original position. Concentrate on the *anāhata cakra* for spiritual benefits. For physical benefits when in the upright position, concentrate on the nose tip and in the bent position concentrate on the *maṇipūra cakra*. Repeat five times.



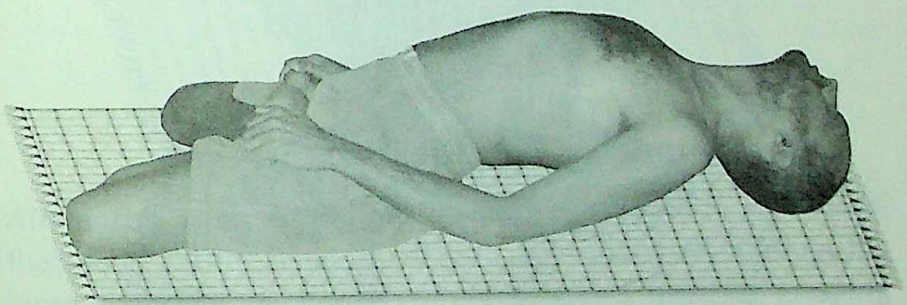
Baddha-padmāsana (*Locked Lotus Pose*)

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Benefits It is very beneficial in stomach ailments. It helps physical development in children. It makes the chest well developed and strong. If women practise it, some weeks after delivery, it can help in removing pregnancy marks from the stomach. It helps in toning up the neck, hands, shoulders and the back. It proves very beneficial in cough, asthma, piles, hernia, sciatica, sexual problems and epilepsy.

MATSYĀSANA (FISH POSE)

Sit in *padmāsana* (lotus pose). Bend backwards and lie on the floor with legs in the folded position. Clasp both hands and cradle the head in them. Then arch the back a little and raising the shoulders rest the top of the head on the floor. Hold the big toes with the respective hands resting the elbows on the floor. In the final position, breathe in and out deeply. Remain in this position for one to five minutes. Those suffering from tonsillitis and acidity should perform *śītakārī prāṇāyāma* in the final position. For spiritual benefits, concentrate on the *anāhata cakra* and for physical benefits on the *maṇipūra cakra*. This *āsana* proves more beneficial, if practised after *sarvāṅgāsana*.



Matsyāsana (*Fish pose*)

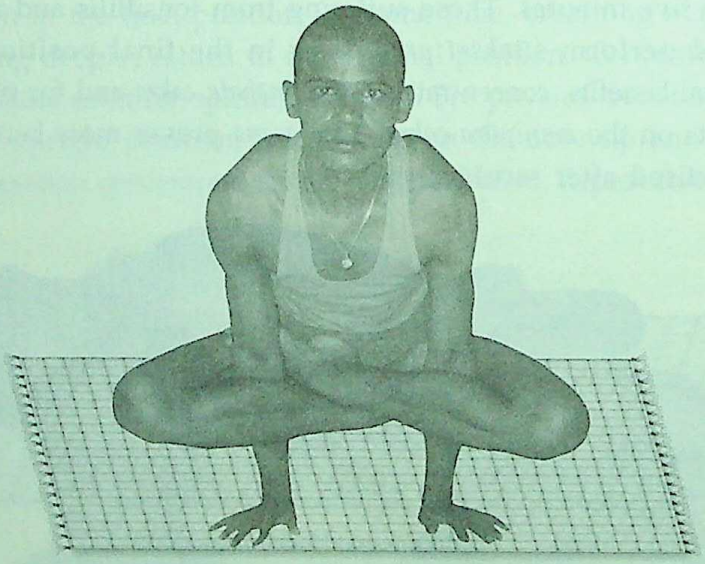
Benefits It is very good for stomach ailments. It remedies constipation and obstruction of blood flow in the back. The alternative to this posture is *supta-vajrāsana* (slept-diamond pose).

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For beginners — Sit on the floor. Keep one leg stretched straight and place the other foot on the thigh of the first leg. Rest of the steps remain the same. This is an easier alternative for the beginners. If one finds this difficult, too, then, keep both the legs straight. Rest of the steps should be the same. One can press the floor with the hands to raise the shoulders and go into the final position.

KUKKUṬĀSANA (COCK POSE)

Kukkuṭa means a cock. Sit in *padmāsana* (lotus pose). Slide your hands between the calves and thighs. Place the palms on the floor with the fingers pointed forward. Raise the entire body on the arms. Remain in this position till you can. Breathing should be normal. Then, lower the body back to the floor. Repeat five times. Concentrate on the *anāhata cakra*.



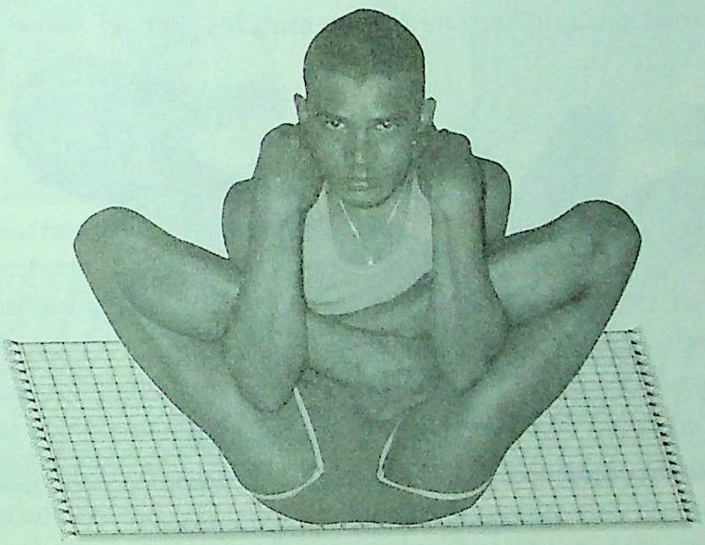
Kukkuṭāsana (*Cock pose*)

Benefits It tones up the hands, shoulders and the chest and makes them strong. It banishes laziness. It makes the shoulders wide and increases the length of the hands. It is very beneficial in ailments related to the chest.

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GARBHĀSANA (FOETUS POSE)

Garbha means a womb and the person in this position is positioned like a foetus. Hence, it is called *garbhāsana*. Sit in *padmāsana* (lotus pose). Slide the hands between the thighs and calves till the elbows appear on the other side. Then, balancing the body on the buttocks, bend the arms from the elbows upwards and try to grasp your ears. Breathe out when trying to reach out for the ears. Try to remain in the final position as long as you can, be breathing normally. Concentrate on the *maṇipūra cakra* or the breath. Repeat five to ten times.



Garbhāsana (*Foetus pose*)

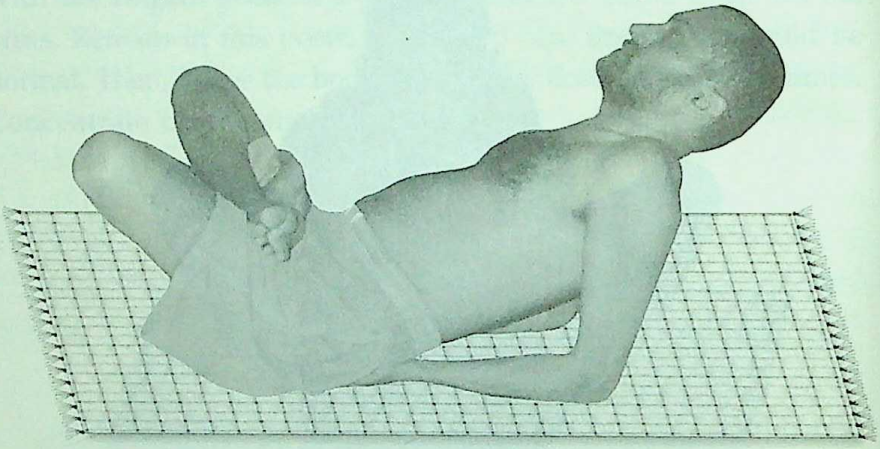
Alternative — If it is difficult to try this posture in *padmāsana*, then squat on the haunches. Then, push the arms between the inner thighs and the calves from outside and, then, try grasping the ears from inside. Keep the head upright. This pose is often used to punish errant students in schools in India.

Benefits It keeps the mind and stomach balanced. It tones up weak nerves. Those who feel angry, unhappy, impatient and overexcited should practice this posture the maximum. It makes the digestion strong, as well.

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TOLĀṄGULĀSANA (WEIGH-SCALE POSE)

Sit in *padmāsana* (lotus pose). Then, lie on the back. Place the palms under the buttocks. With the elbows resting on the floor, raise the upper torso so that the weight rests on the elbows and buttocks. Also, raise the legs up as much as you can. Inhale deeply and, then, perform *jālandhara bandha*. Without any tension in the body and relaxing fully remain in this position, for some time. Then, exhaling slowly return to the starting position. Concentrate on the *maṇipūra cakra* or the breathing. The final position resembles a weighing-scale and so it is called *tolāṅgulāsana*. Remain in the final position for one to five minutes. Repeat five times.



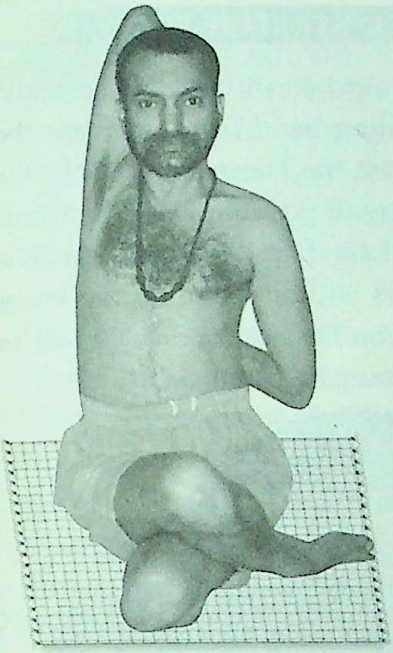
Tolāṅgulāsana (*Weigh-scale pose*)

Benefits This posture remedies obesity. It also remedies ailments related to the stomach. It makes the shoulders, back, neck and chest very strong and shapes them good.

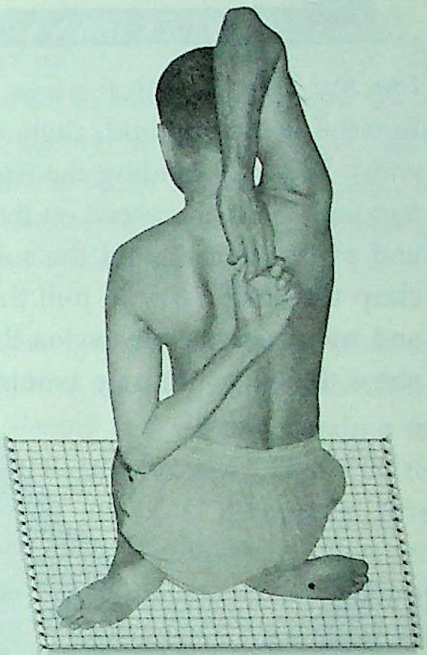
GOMUKHĀSANA (COW'S FACE POSE)

Sit on the floor with outstretched legs. Bend the left leg and position the left foot near the right buttocks. Cross the right leg over the left so that the knees are one above the other. The right foot should be touching the side of the left hip. Take the left hand

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Gomukhāsana (*Cow's face pose*)



back-view

back and reach up, as much as possible. Then, raise the right hand above the head and bend it behind on the back and hold the left hand. Keep the upper torso and the head upright. Remain in the final position for as long as you can, breathing normally. Keep the eyes closed. After some time, return to the original position. Concentrate on the *ājñā cakra* or the breathing. Reverse the position of the hands and legs and repeat the procedure. Alternatively, practice this two to five times.

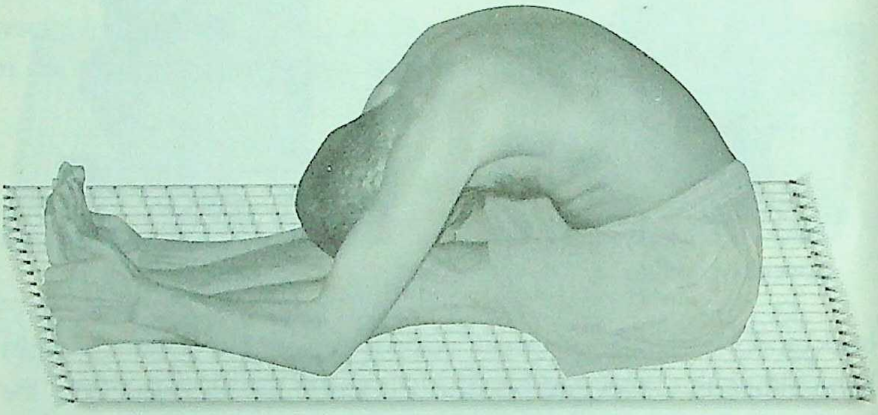
Benefits It remedies problems like rheumatism, sciatica, pain in thighs and legs, indigestion, weak digestion, back pain and pain in hands. It is very beneficial for diabetics. It also helps maintain celibacy as, in this position, the *mūla bandha* is performed automatically. It removes problems related to the sex organs. It makes the chest strong and toned.

Related postures — *Vāma jānvāsana, dakṣiṇa jānvāsana.*

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PAŚCIMOTTĀNĀSANA (BACK STRETCH POSE)

Practice I — Sit with the legs outstretched in front of the body. Breathe in deeply and, then, exhaling bend forward from the waist. Without bending the legs from the knees, try to hold the toes and rest the forehead on the knees. If possible, clasp the hands and place them around the soles of the feet. Beginners can just clasp the ankles. Try to pull the toes without bending the knees and try to rest the elbows on the floor. Do not bend the knees or stress the body. Do only as much you can, comfortably.



Paścimottānāsana I (Back stretch pose)

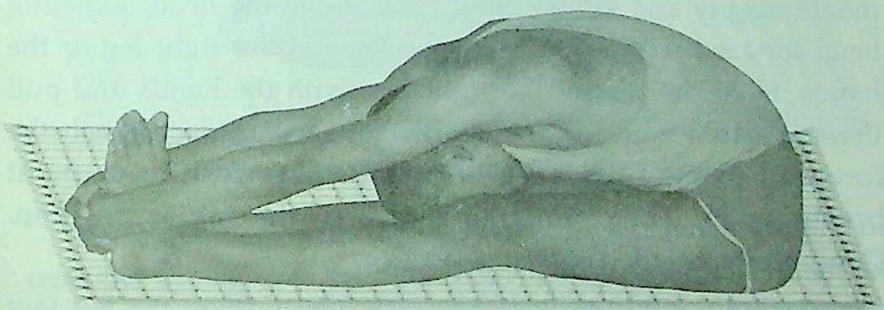
Remain in the final position breathing normally for as long as you can. Then, inhaling deeply return to the starting position. Repeat ten to fifteen times. For spiritual benefits, concentrate on the *svādiṣṭhāna cakra*. For physical benefits, concentrate on the *maṇipūra cakra* or the breathing. Those suffering from sciatica, heart problem, back pain, rheumatism and stomach ailments should not practice this posture without the guidance of an expert Yoga teacher.

In Sanskrit, *paścima* means the back and as the back is *uttāna* (stretched) in this posture, it is called *paścimottānāsana*. It is a very beneficial posture. After *śīrṣāsana* and *sarvāṅgāsana* the *sādhaka* (aspirant) should give importance to this posture.

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Benefits It activates the *brahma nāḍī, suṣumnānāḍī* and the digestive system. It helps shed extra fat from the abdomen, waist and buttocks. It helps remedy obesity, constipation, piles and indigestion. It activates all the glands in the abdominal region. It is very beneficial for diabetics. Women could practice it for banishing problems related to reproductive organs.

Practice II — This posture can also be done in another way. Lie on the back with the legs straight and joined together. Stretch the hands above the head. Inhaling deeply and without bending the hands sit up. Then exhaling bend the upper torso forward till the stretched hands touch the toes. Do not bend the hands. After remaining in the final position, return to the sitting position and, then, lie down. This is called *gatyātmaka paścimottānāsana* (hyperactive back-stretch pose). This remedies back pain and problems related to the spine.



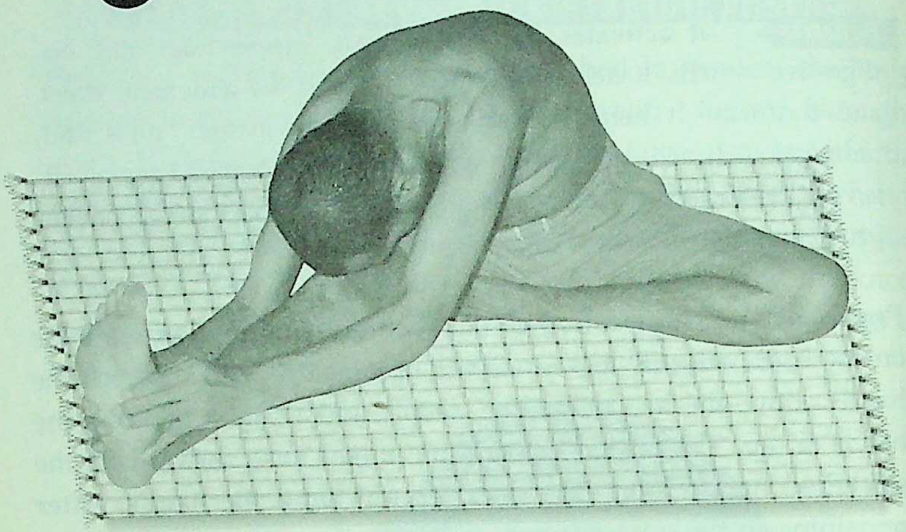
Paścimottānāsana — II

This posture has great soothing effect on the brain. Hence, it is very beneficial for those seeking mental balance and peace of mind and riddance from tensions.

JĀNUŚIRĀSANA (ARDHPAŚCIMOTTĀNĀSANA — HALF BACK STRETCH POSE)

Sit with the legs outstretched. Fold the left leg and position it in a way that the heel touches the perineum and the sole of the left foot touches the inner thigh. Keeping the head and back straight,

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Jānuśirāsana (Ardhapaścimottānāsana — Half back stretch pose)

inhale deeply and stretch the hands above the head. Exhaling bend forward without bending the knee of the right leg or the hands. Hold the toes of the right foot with the hands and pull them towards you. Let the elbows touch the floor. Touch the forehead to the right knee. Remain in this position without breathing in. Then, inhaling return to the initial position. Concentrate on the *svādhiṣṭhāna cakra*.

Alternative — Sit with the legs outstretched. Place the left foot over the right thigh in *ardha-padmāsana* pose. Rest of the steps are as above.

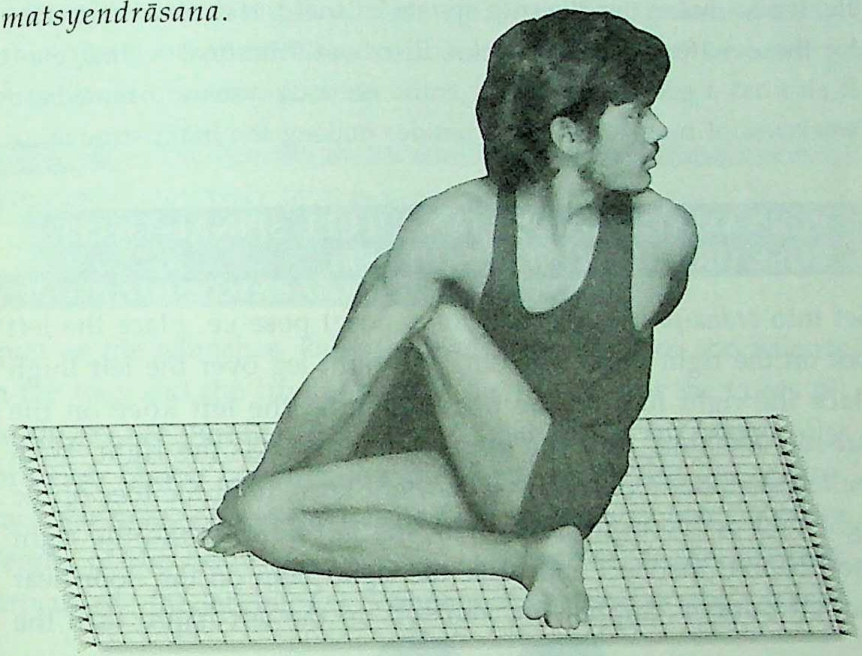
If possible, take the left hand to the back and with it hold the left toes from the behind. This is called *ardha-padma-paścimottānāsana* (half lotus back-stretch pose).

Benefits It has all the benefits of *paścimotānāsana* (back-stretch pose). It is very beneficial for sex problems, diabetes, sciatica, heat in the intestines, flatulence and urinary disorders.

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ARDHMATSYENDRĀSANA (HALF SPINAL-TWIST POSE OR HALF KING FISH POSE)

Matsyendra was the name of a great *yogī*. The posture in which he was usually sitting and attained liberation is called *matsyendrāsana*.



Ardhmatsyendrāsana (*Half spinal-twist pose*)

Sit on the floor with the legs outstretched. Inhale deeply and cross the left leg over the right thigh and place the sole of left foot on the floor by the side of the right knee. Next, bend the right leg and place the right heel close to the left buttocks. Exhale slowly and turn the upper torso to the left and cross the right hand from the outside of the left knee and hold the left leg's sole. At the same time, place the left hand around the back. Turning the upper torso and the neck as much as you can look backwards. Breathe normally and try to remain in the final position for as long as you can. If one holds the breath in the final position so much the better. Breathe deeply and, then, exhaling return to the starting position. Then, repeat changing the sides. Do this five times. For

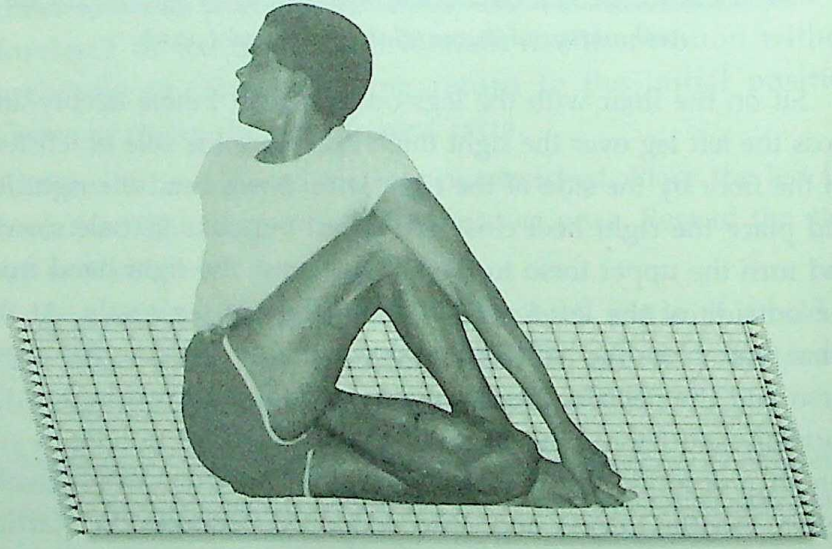
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spiritual benefits, concentrate on the *ājñā cakra* and for physical benefits, concentrate on the *svādhiṣṭhāna cakra*.

Benefits The posture massages the spinal column and remedies problems related to the spine like sciatica, spondylitis, migraine, etc. It also makes the digestive system balanced. It is very beneficial for those suffering from diabetes, diarrhoea, intestinal worms, etc. It also has a good effect on the entire nervous system. It remedies weakness of nerves and veins besides making the brain stronger.

PŪRṆAMATSYAINDRĀSANA (FULL SPINAL-TWIST POSE OR FULL KING FISH POSE)

Get into *ardha-padmāsana* (half lotus pose) pose i.e. place the left foot on the right thigh. Crossing the right leg over the left thigh place the right foot on the floor touching the left knee on the outside. Exhaling turn the upper torso towards the right. With the left shoulder crossing over the right knee, hold the toes of the right foot or the right ankle with the left hand. Take the right hand behind the back and place the right palm on the floor near the left buttock. Supporting yourself on the left hand, turn the



Pūrṇamatsyaindrāsana (*Full spinal-twist pose*)

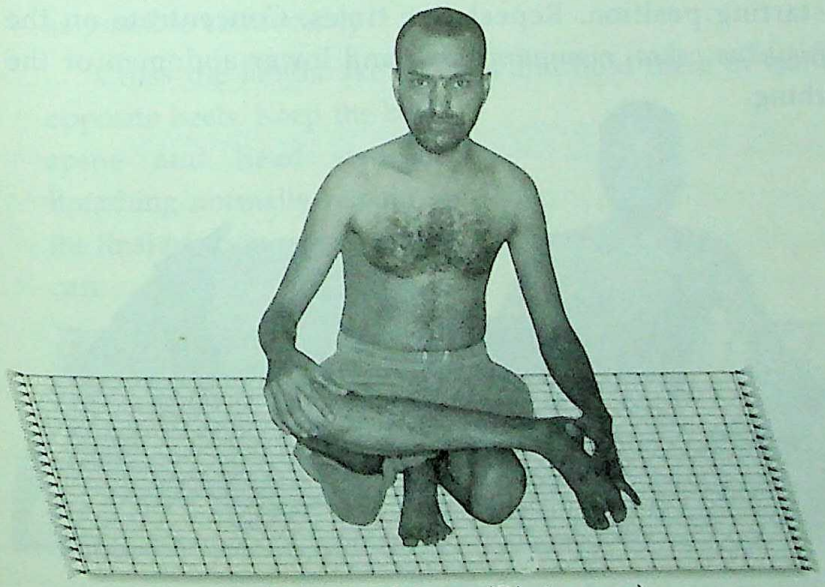
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upper torso, as much as you can, towards the right. Next, turn the neck, too, towards the right and try to look backwards. Do not bend the head forward. Without stressing yourself, remain in the final position as long as you can. Breathe normally or hold the breath. Returning to the starting position, inhale deeply. Concentrate on the *ājñā cakra*, back, stomach and breathing. Repeat in the reverse position.

Benefits The benefits that accrue in *ardhamatsyendrāsana* occur even more effectively by this posture.

PADĀNGUṢṬHĀSANA (BIG TOE POSE)

Squat on the haunches. Raise the heels from the floor and balance on the toes and the frontal base of the feet. Lower the knees till the thighs are parallel to the floor. Position the left heel on the perineum region between the anal opening and the sex-organs. Place the right foot on the left thigh in such a way that the entire weight of the body is supported on the toes of the left foot, particularly, the left big toe. Maintain the balance on the left foot.



Pādāṅguṣṭhāsana (*Big toe pose*)

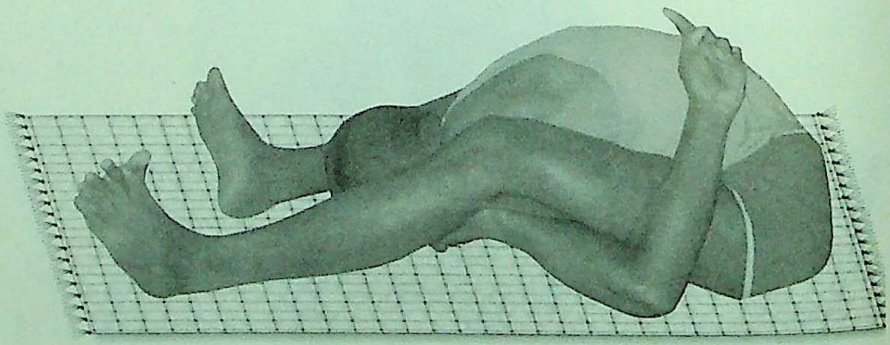
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Position the fingers of both hands in *jñāna-mudrā* or keep relaxed as shown. The breathing should remain normal. Concentrate on the *mūlādhāra cakra*. Reverse the position of the feet and repeat.

Benefits This position is beneficial in maintenance of celibacy, night fall, impotency, etc. *Dhātupramaih* (disease in which sperm and other vital humours of the body are expelled through the urine). It also remedies the problem of nocturnal emissions and piles both bloodless and bloody. It keeps the eyesight strong. It also increases the suppleness and strength of the toes and the feet.

KŪRMĀSANA (TORTOISE POSE)

Sit with the legs outstretched and spread apart. Inhale and, then, exhaling slowly bend forward till the forehead touches the floor. Slide the hands under the legs from the inside and take them behind the back. Try to clasp the fingers behind the back in this position. Push the upper torso and the forehead to the floor as much as you can. In the final position breathe normally or hold the breath without breathing in. Breathing in, rise and return to the starting position. Repeat five times. Concentrate on the *svādhiṣṭhāna cakra, maṇipūra cakra* and lower abdomen or the breathing.



Kūrmāsana (Tortoise pose)

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Benefits This posture makes the kidneys stronger and banishes urinary disorders. It also helps in slip disc and in returning the discs to their natural position. It remedies neck pain and headache. Patients, suffering from slip disc, sciatica and pain of bones, should practise this posture under the guidance of a Yoga expert.

GORAKṢĀSANA (SECURED COW POSTURE)

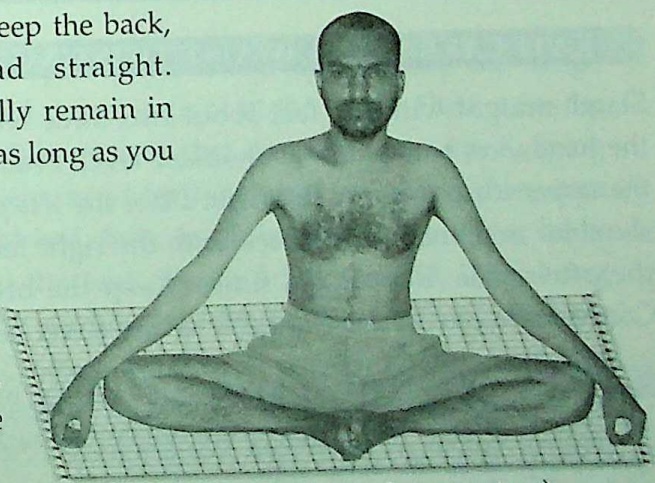
Gorakṣa Nāth was the name of a great *yogī*. The posture, which he practised more and in which he attained liberation, is called *gorakṣāsana*.

Practice I — Sit with the legs outstretched. Bend the legs from the knees and bring the feet close to the sex-organs. Join the soles of both the feet and raising the heels, position them near the body, pointed upwards towards the navel. Keep the back, spine and head straight. Hold both your hands in *cin* or *jñāna* mudra on your knees and be relaxed.

Practice II — Squat on the haunches keeping the feet a foot or two feet apart and expand your knees stretching outwards as much as possible comfortably.

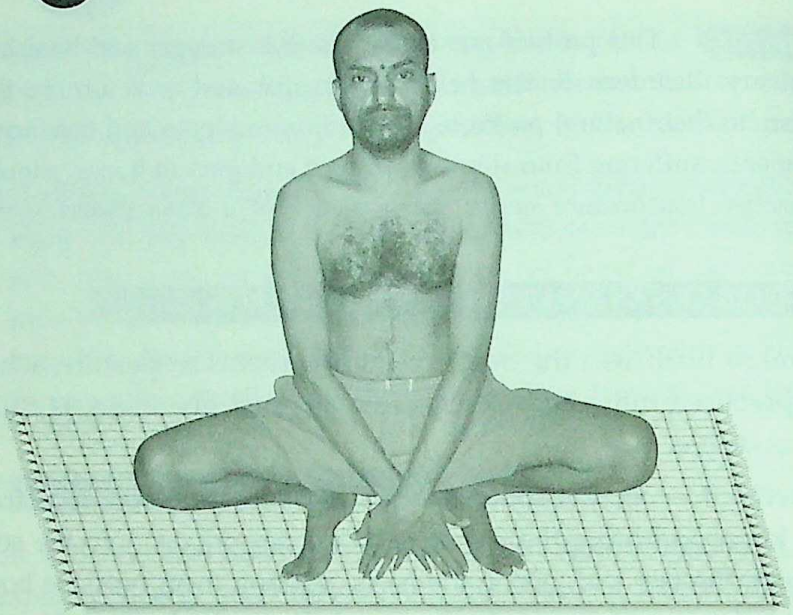
Cross the hands like scissors and hold them in front of the opposite heels. Keep the back, spine and head straight. Breathing normally remain in the final position as long as you can.

Concentrate on the *ājñā cakra*, nose tip or the breathing. Repeat five times.



Gorakṣāsana (Secured cow posture)

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Gorakṣāsana — II

Benefits One who has perfected this posture can meditate in this position. This posture makes the feet and toes flexible. It also brings all the benefits of *matsyendrāsana*.

STANDING POSTURE SERIES

KAṬI CAKRĀSANA (WAIST-TWISTING POSE)

Stand straight with the feet about two-three feet apart. Extend the hands, on both sides, at shoulder level. From the waist, twist the upper torso towards the right. Place the left palm on the right shoulder and encircle the back with the right hand. Repeat from the other side. Repeat ten times. Keep the breathing normal. Concentrate on the *anāhata cakra* or the navel centre.

Benefits This posture banishes stress from the back, waist, spine and other body joints. This posture forms the fourth among *śaṅkha prakṣālana kriyā* of *haṭha-yoga*.

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Kaṭi cakrāsana (*Waist-twisting pose*)



Side view

Alternative — Sit straight with the legs apart. Clasp the hands and position the joined palms in front of the navel. Then, raise the hands up and twist the wrists so that the palms face up. Keeping the upper body straight, bend forward from the waist. Then, turn first towards the right and, then, towards left, let the upper body be perpendicular to the legs. Do so 4-5 times and, then, bring the hands back to the starting position before the navel. Rest for some time. Repeat 5 times. Breathe in, when raising the hands and Exhale, when bending forward. When twisting towards the right, twisting left and bringing the hands down to the normal position, maintain normal breath.

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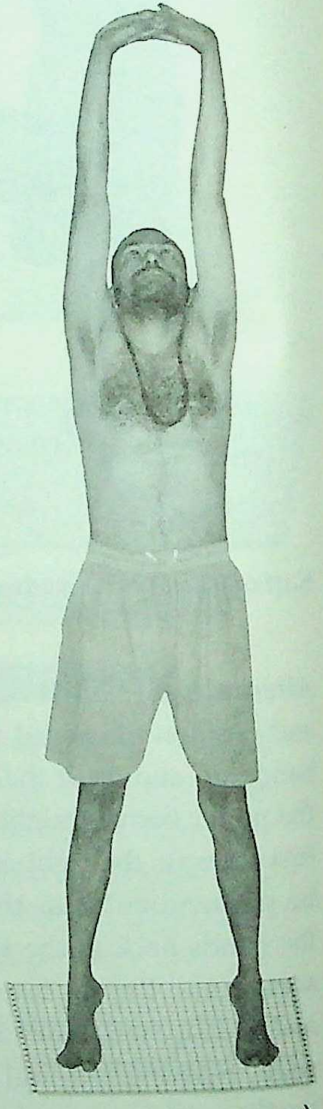
TĀḌĀSANA (PALM TREE POSE)

Stand straight with the feet about six inches apart. Raise the hands straight above the head. Clasp the fingers and twist from the wrists so that the palms face up. Fix the gaze on the upturned palms. Raise the heels from the floor and stretch the body upwards as if someone is holding you by your clasped hands and is pulling you up. Balance on the toes. Slowly bring the heels down to the floor. Repeat ten times.

Alternative 1 — After raising the heels and balancing on the toes, now raise one of your foot off the ground and swing it, back and forth. Balance the body on the toes of the other foot. Similarly, do with the other leg.

Alternative 2 — Stand with the feet apart and with the hands raised above the head and crossed over like scissors from the wrists. Bend forward from the waist till the upper torso is parallel to the floor. Raise the toes from the floor and balance on the heels so as to stretch the spine. Spread the hands side ways. Lowering the toes, straighten the upper body and bring the hands to the original crossed position.

Inhale, when rising up and exhale, when bending down. Repeat ten times. One should surely practice this posture after *śīrṣāsana* and other postures in which one has to balance on the head.



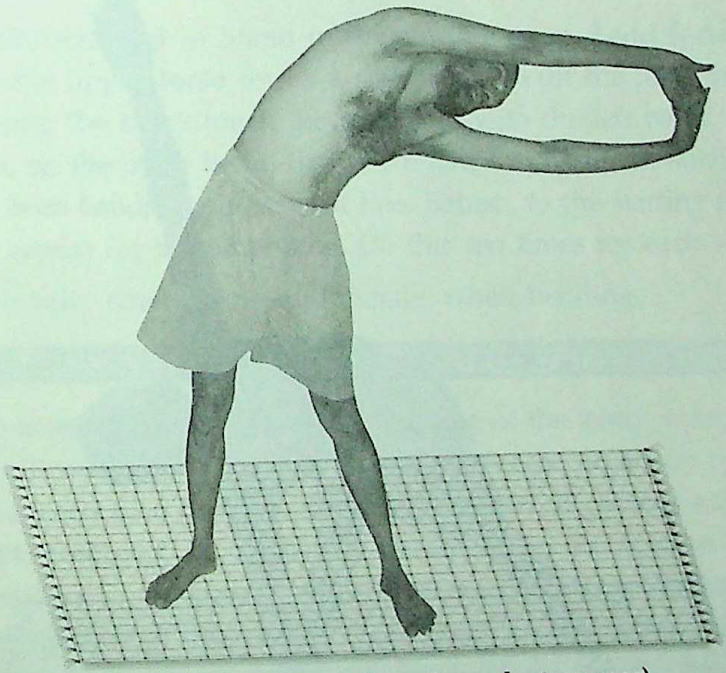
Tāḍāsana (*Palm tree pose*)

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Benefits It tones up the muscles of the abdomen and intestines. It expands the intestines. It removes impediments to the development of the spine and the nerves. This posture forms the first in the *śaṅkha prakṣālana* series.

TIRYAKA TĀḌĀSANA (SWAYING PALM TREE POSE)

Practice — Stand in *tāḍāsana*. Raise the heels and balance on the toes. Then, bend sideways from the waist, first, towards the right and, then, towards the left. One should bend from the waist without bending the knees or moving the feet. Inhale, when rising up and exhale, when bending. Repeat ten times. Concentrate on the *ājñā cakra* or the breathing.



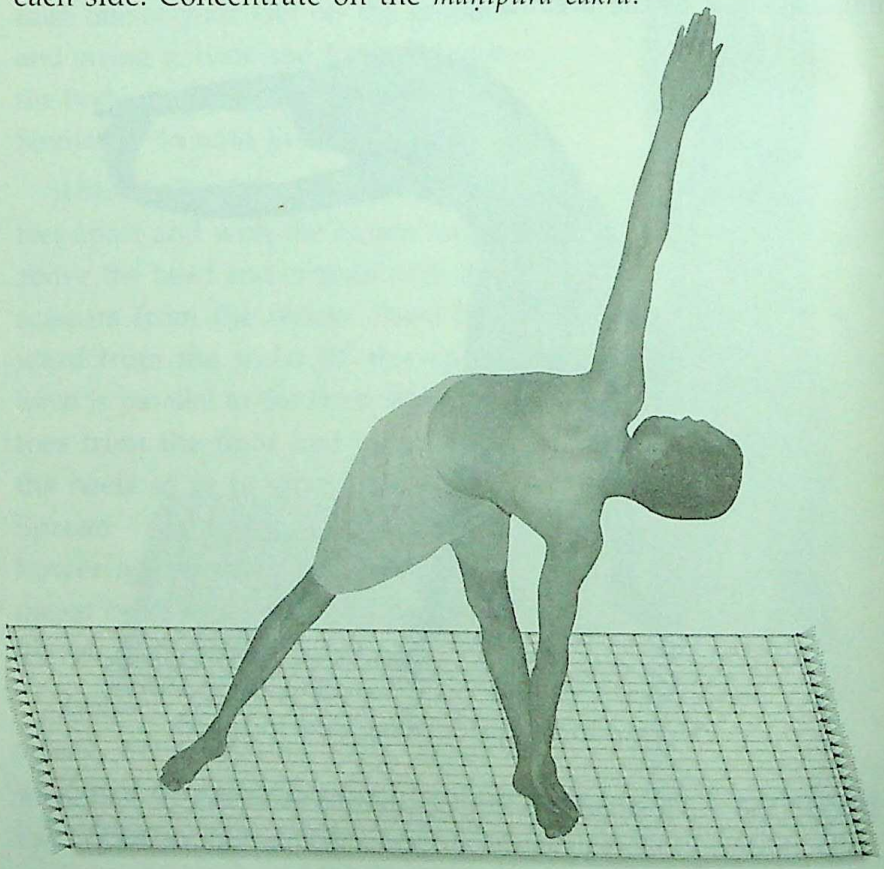
***Tiryaka Tāḍāsana* (Swaying palm tree pose)**

Benefits All benefits accruing from *tāḍāsana* can be had from this posture, too. This posture forms the second in the *śaṅkha prakṣālana* series.

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TRIKOṆĀSANA (TRIANGLE POSE)

Keep the feet two to three feet apart and stand straight. This is the starting pose. Spread the hands sideways at shoulder level. Raise the right hand up, the elbow touching the right ear. Inhale and stretch upwards while raising the hand. Then exhaling bend forward slowly moving towards the left. Place the left palm on the floor or on your left foot. Turn the palm of the right hand to make it face the floor so that the right side and right hand are stretched and are placed in a straight line. Remain in this position without breathing in. Then, inhaling deeply, return to the starting position. Repeat on the other side. Repeat maximum ten times on each side. Concentrate on the *maṇipūra cakra*.



Trikoṇāsana (*Triangle pose*)

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Benefits It remedies disorders of the nerves, tension, depression, laziness and constipation. It also increases the appetite. It is very beneficial for growing children.

Alternative 1 — Stand in the starting pose. Bend forward a bit towards the right and touch the right toes with the right hand fingers. Keep the left hand on the left hip. Do not bend the knees. Rise and repeat for the other side.

Alternative 2 — Stand in the starting pose. Behind the back hold the left wrist with the right hand. Bend forward from the waist and try to touch the nose to the knees. First touch the left knee and, then, the right. Each time, return to the starting position and, then, try for the other knee.

Alternative 3 — Stand in the starting pose. Bend forward so that the upper torso forms a right angle with the legs. Without bending the knees touch the right toes with the left hand. Fix the gaze, on the other hand, that is stretched upwards in such a way that both hands are in straight line. Return, to the starting position and repeat for the other side. Do this ten times for each side.

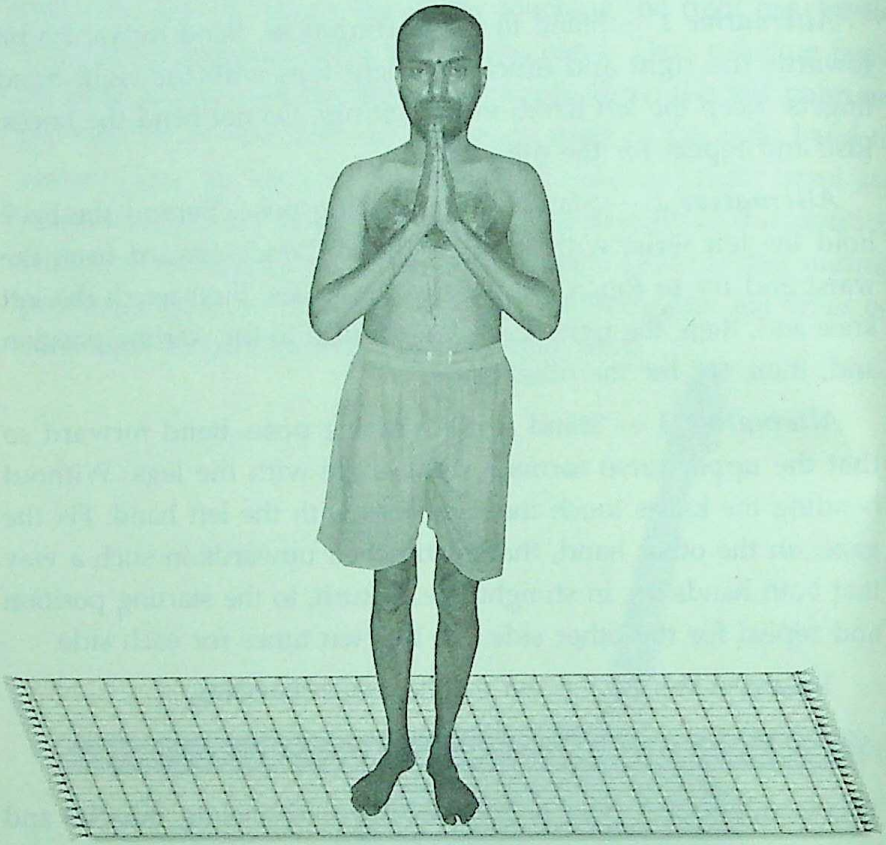
Inhale, when rising and exhale, when bending.

SŪRYA NAMASKĀRA (SUN SALUTATION POSE)

This is an amazing practice for massage of the joints, muscles and all internal organs, although in the Yoga tradition it is not considered as a posture. Still, this practice, if performed, before Yoga postures, it makes the latter easier to perform. *Sūrya namaskāra* is a group of twelve postures, which symbolize the twelve signs of the Zodiac. Repeating the entire set two times constitutes one *sūrya namaskāra*. For complete benefit, one should stick to the rules regarding breathing and concentration on particular *cakra*s. Besides, one should chant the related *mantra* syllable. The twelve postures are as follows.

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Step 1 — Prārthanāsana (salutation pose) Keep the feet together or with a little gap and joining the palms, position them near the chest. Keep the breathing normal. Let the body relax

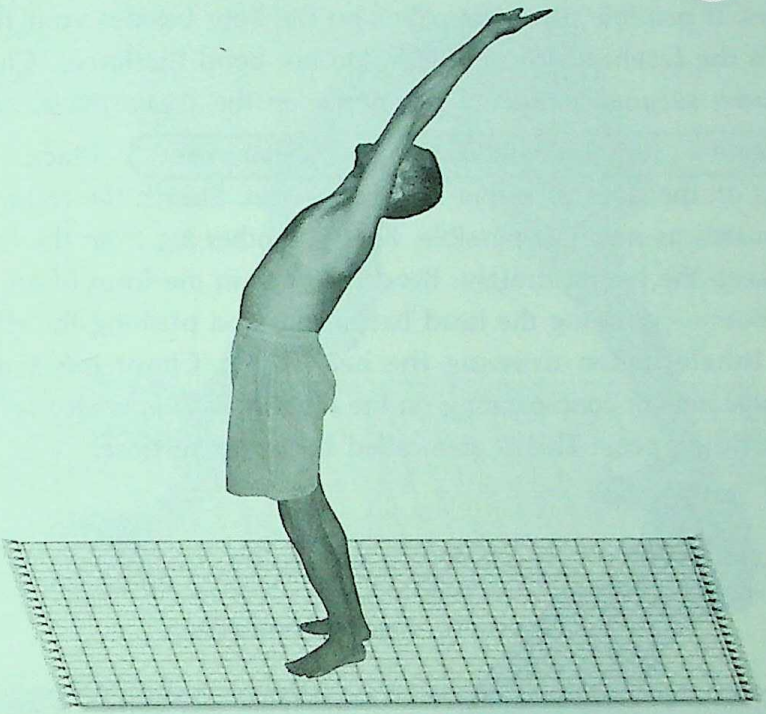


Sun Salutation Step 1 — Prārthanāsana

and chant the *mantra* syllable — ***oṁ hrāṁ mitrāya namaḥ*** — mentally or vocally. Concentrate on the *anāhata cakra*.

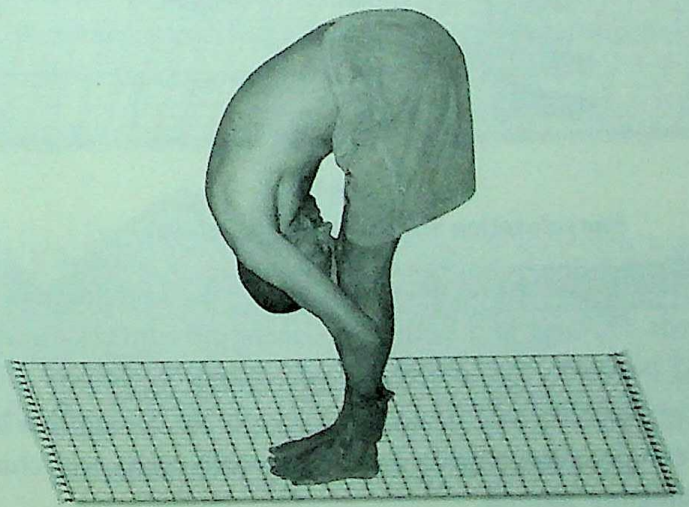
Step 2 — Hastottānāsana (raised arm pose) Next, raise hands straight up. The hands must be shoulder width apart. Breathe in and bend the head and the upper torso backwards in the shape of an arc. Do not bend the legs. Remain in the final position for some moments. Chant ***oṁ hrīṁ ravaye namaḥ***. Concentrate on the *viśuddhi cakra*.

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Sun salutation Step 2 Hastottānāsana

Step 3 — *Pāda-hastāsana (foot-hand pose)* Now come forward, exhale and bend forward and touch the toes with the

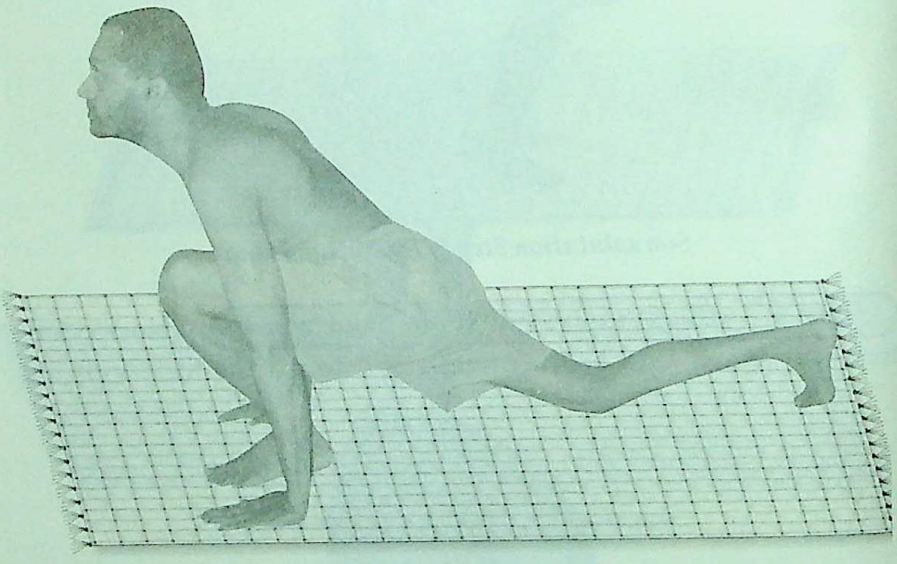


Sun salutation Step 3 — Pāda-hastāsana

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fingers. If possible place the palms on the floor besides your foot. Touch the forehead to the knees. Do not bend the knees. Chant *oṁ hrūṁ sūryāya namaḥ*. Concentrate on the *svādhiṣṭhāna cakra*.

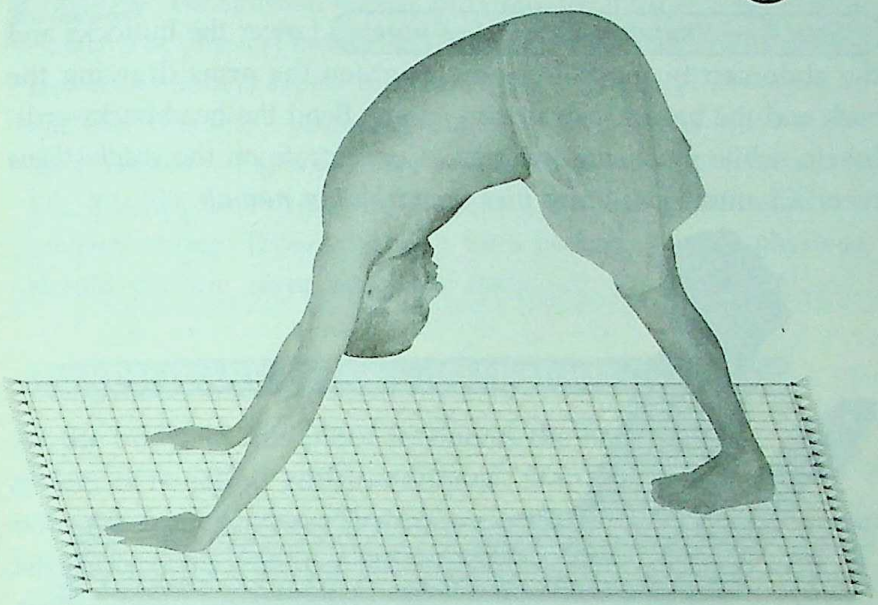
Step 4 — Aśvasañcālanāsana (equestrian pose) Place the palms on the floor on either side of the feet. Stretch the right leg backwards as much as possible. Bend the other leg from the knee and keep the hands straight. Bend the back in the form of an arc or a bow — drawing the head backwards and pushing the chest out. Inhale, when drawing the head back. Chant *oṁ hraīṁ bhānave namaḥ* concentrating on the *ājñā cakra*. This is also called horse riding pose. This is also called horse riding pose.



Sun salutation Step 4 — Aśvasañcālanāsana

Step 5 — Parvatāsana (mountain pose) Stretch the left leg backwards too and join both legs. Raise the buttocks and bring the head between the arms inwards. Keep the hands and legs straight so that the body looks like a mountain. Doing this breathe out i.e. exhale. Concentrate on the *viśuddhi cakra* and chant *oṁ hraūṁ khagāya namaḥ*.

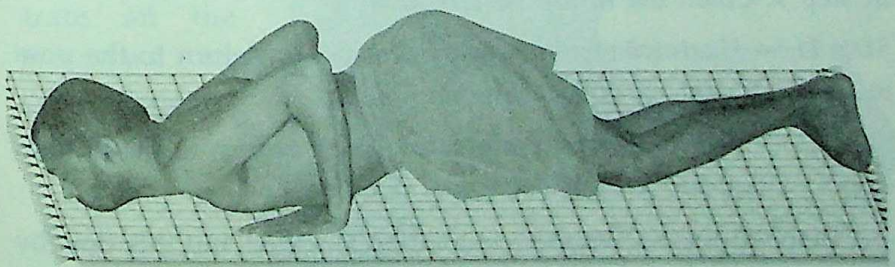
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Sun salutation Step 5 — Parvatāsana

Step 6 — Aṣṭāṅga namaskārāsana (eight limbs salutation pose)

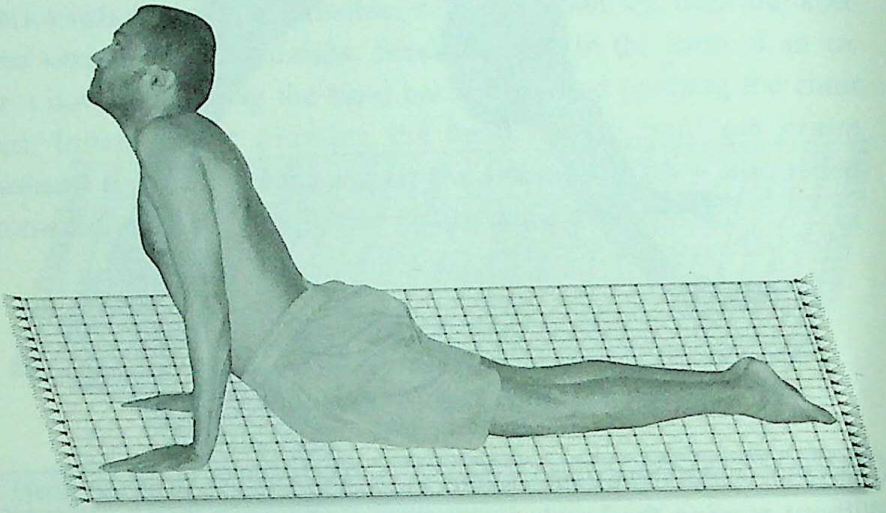
Without moving the hands and feet from the previous pose bring the body down and lower the body to the floor so that the chin, chest and knees touch the floor. Let the abdomen and the buttocks remain a bit raised from the floor. Perform *kumbhaka*, i.e., hold the breath without inhaling, i.e., retention. Concentrate on the *maṇipūra cakra* chanting ***oṁ hraḥ pūsṇe namaḥ***.



Sun salutation Step 6 — Aṣṭāṅga namaskārāsana

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Step 7 — Bhujaṅgāsana (cobra pose) Lower the buttocks and the abdomen to the floor and straighten the arms drawing the back and the head backwards in an arc. Bend the head backwards. Inhale, while practising this pose. Concentrate on the *svādhiṣṭhāna cakra*. Chanting *oṁ hrāṁ hiraṇyagarbhāya namaḥ*.



Sun salutation Step 7 — Bhujaṅgāsana

Step 8 — Parvatāsana (mountain pose): Return to the pose in step 5. Chant *oṁ hrīṁ maricaye namaḥ*.

Step 9 — Aśvasañcālanāsana (equestrian pose): Return to the pose in step 4. Chant *oṁ hrūm ādityāya namaḥ*.

Step 10 — Pāda-hastāsana (foot-hand pose): Return to the pose in step 3. Chant *oṁ hraīṁ sāvitre namaḥ*.

Step 11 — Hastottānāsana (raised arm pose): Return to the pose in step 2. Chant *oṁ hraūṁ arkāya namaḥ*.

Step 12 — Prārthanāsana (salutation pose): Return to the pose in step 1. Chant *oṁ hraḥ bhāskarāya namaḥ*.

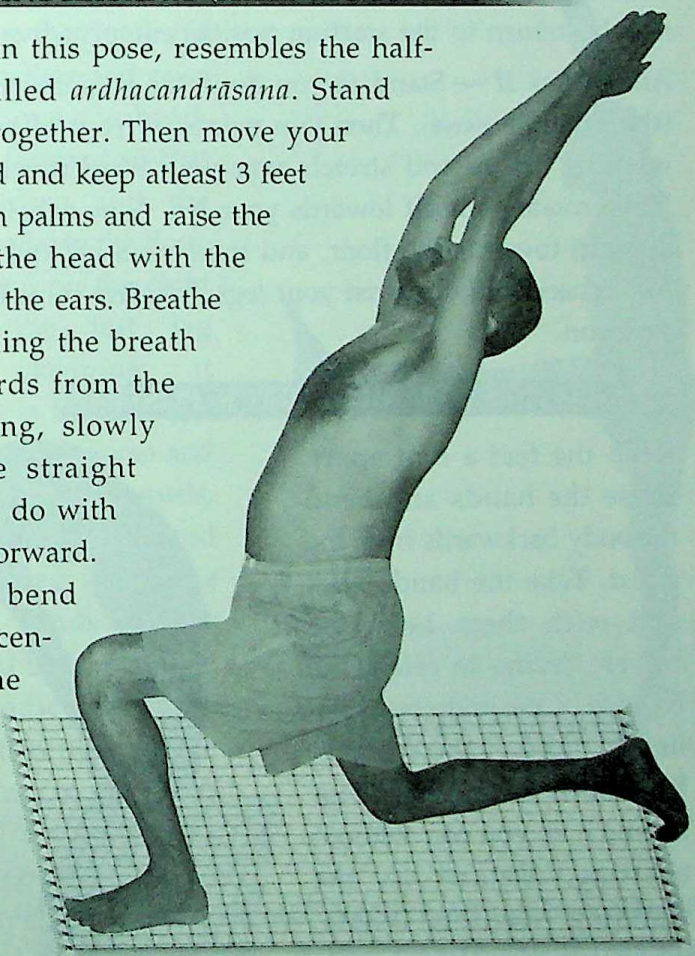
Then, all the twelve steps should be repeated, but this time by reversing the position of the legs in certain stages. Thus, one *sūrya namaskāra* is completed.

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Benefits For spiritual benefit, carry out, the third to twelve steps, slowly. For physical benefit, go through the third to twelfth steps, fast or one should repeat as many cycles of the *sūrya namaskāra* as one can. This set of postures balances all the systems of the body. *sūrya namaskāra* is specially beneficial for those who lead a sedentary life. It is helpful for students for making the intellect sharp and the memory strong. Those who wish for a perfectly healthy physique should perform *sūrya namaskāra*, daily.

ARDHACANDRĀSANA (HALF-MOON POSE)

As the body, in this pose, resembles the half-moon, it is called *ardhacandrāsana*. Stand with the feet together. Then move your left leg forward and keep atleast 3 feet away. Join both palms and raise the hands above the head with the arms touching the ears. Breathe in. Then, holding the breath bend backwards from the waist. Exhaling, slowly return to the straight posture. Then, do with the right leg forward. Do not bend forward. Concentrate on the *maṇipūra cakra*. Repeat five times.



Ardhacandrāsana (*Half-moon pose*)

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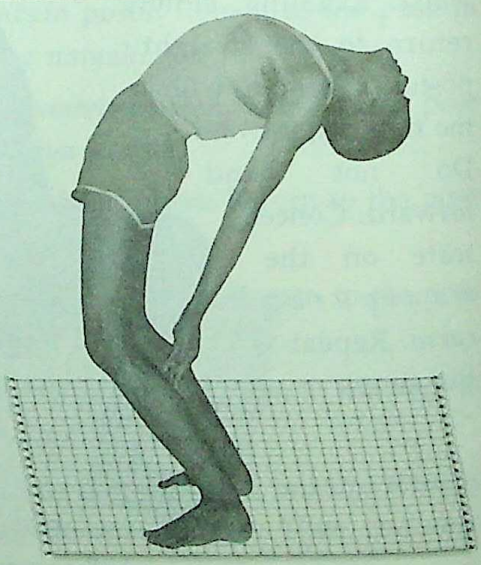
Benefits This posture makes the entire body strong and flexible. It tones the large intestine, muscles of the spinal region, nerves, buttocks, knees, thighs and the ribs. All physical problems, pain and ailments related to these regions, are removed.

Alternative I — Stand with the feet together. Move the right leg backwards and extend it. Bend the left leg and raise the joined palms above the head. Then bend the upper torso backwards and draw the head back. The back must be curved like a bow. Breathing normally remain in the final position as long as you can. Exhaling, slowly, return to the starting position. Repeat five times.

Alternative II — Stand as you do in the beginning of Trikoṇāsana (the Triangle pose). Then join palms in front of your chest, then inhaling lift up and stretch over your head touching your ears. Now, rotate yourself towards your left. Now exhaling, sink down, straight towards the floor, and then bend backwards. According to the need you can twist your legs. Inhaling come back to original position.

PRṢṬHĀSANA (BENT-BACK POSE)

Keep the feet a foot apart. Raise the hands and bend the body backwards from the waist. Take the hands back and with them hold the calves. Trying to retain the balance of the body bend the head and the back, backwards towards the floor as much as you can without exerting. Return to the standing position. Inhale, when bending backwards



Pṛṣṭhāsana (Bent-back pose)

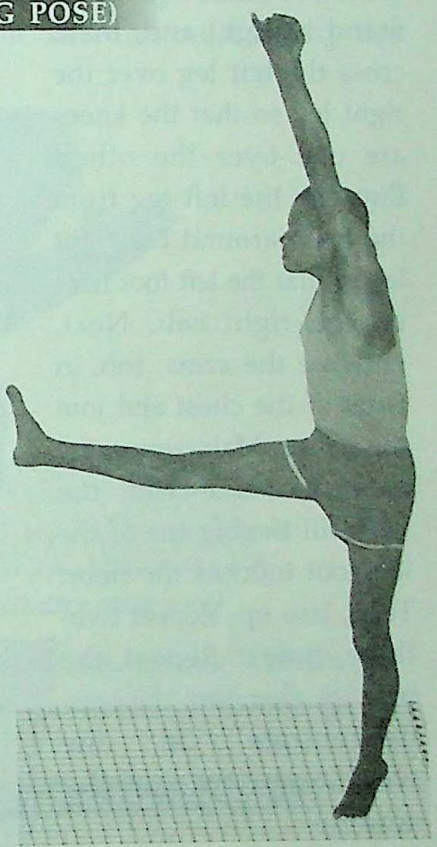
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and exhale, when coming back to the standing position. Those suffering from heart problem, high blood pressure, stomach ulcers and back pain must not practice this posture. Concentrate on the *maṇipūra cakra* or the muscles of the back.

Benefits This posture makes the back and the stomach region strong.

AIKAPĀDĀSANA (ONE LEG POSE)

Stand with both the feet together. Clasp the fingers of the hands together and raise the hands above the head. Slowly bend forward so that the upper torso and the hands are parallel to the floor. Then balancing on the right leg, raise the left leg backwards keeping it straight till it is in a straight line with the upper torso and the hands. In other words, the body should be balanced on the right leg while the upper torso, hands and the left leg should be in a straight line, perpendicular to it. Remain, in this position for as long as you can and, then, return to the standing position. Repeat with the other leg. Repeat five times for each leg. Inhale, when raising the hands, exhale, when bending. In the final position breathe,



Aikapādāsana (*One leg pose*)

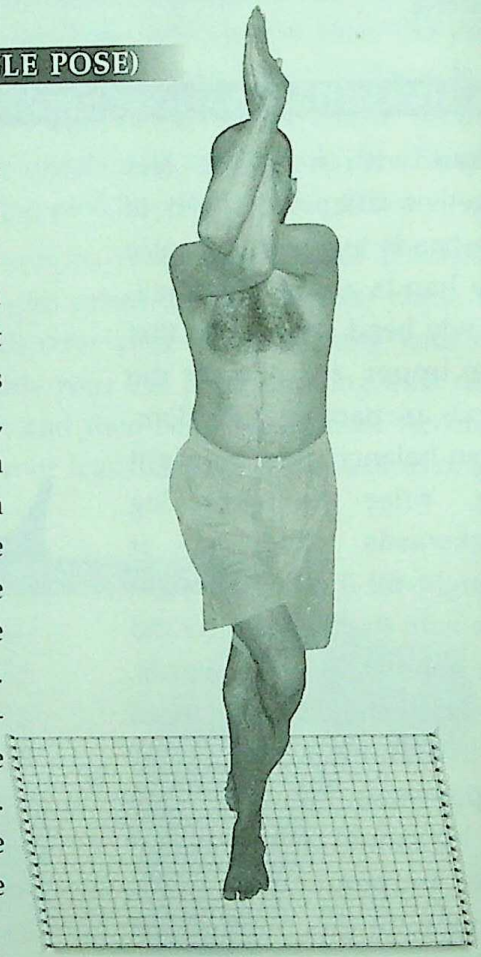
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normally and returning to the starting position, breathe in. Concentrate on maintaining the balance of the body or *anāhata cakra*.

Benefit It makes the entire body strong and balanced and relaxed.

GARUḌĀSANA (EAGLE POSE)

Stand straight and, then, cross the left leg over the right leg so that the knees are one over the other. Entwine the left leg from the front around the right leg so that the left foot rests on the right calf. Next, entwine the arms, too, in front of the chest and join the palms. Maintaining the balance, bend from the knee till the big toe of the left foot touches the floor. Then, rise up. Repeat two-three times. Repeat the practice changing the legs. Concentrate on the *svādhiṣṭhāna cakra* or the nose tip.



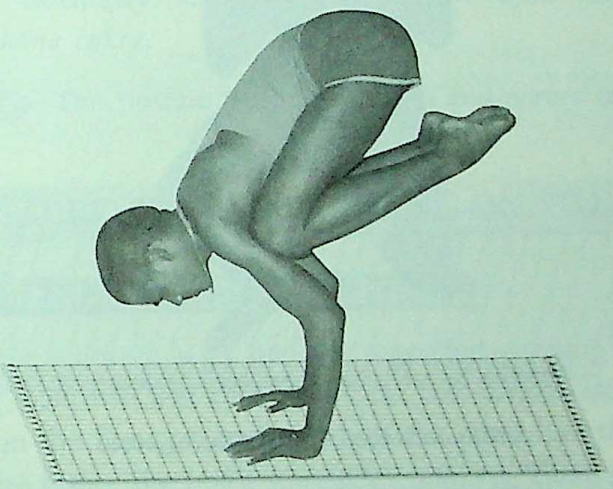
Garuḍāsana (*Eagle pose*)

Benefit This posture removes all problems like enlarged testicles (hernia), back pain, slip disc, rheumatism, sciatica, pain in legs and joints, wind in hands and legs and problems related to anal opening and urinary system.

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BAKADHYĀNĀSANA (MEDITATIVE CRANE POSE)

Sit on the haunches, with the feet apart. Place the palms on the floor in front of the feet. Bend forward and position the knees on the arms above the elbows. Bending forward and putting all the weight on the knees try to raise the feet from the floor. The entire weight of the body must be on the hands. Raise the head little. Remain in this position holding the breath in. Perform the posture one to five times. Concentrate on the nose tip. Those suffering from high blood pressure and brain disorders must not try this posture.



Bakadhyānāsana (*Meditative crane pose*)

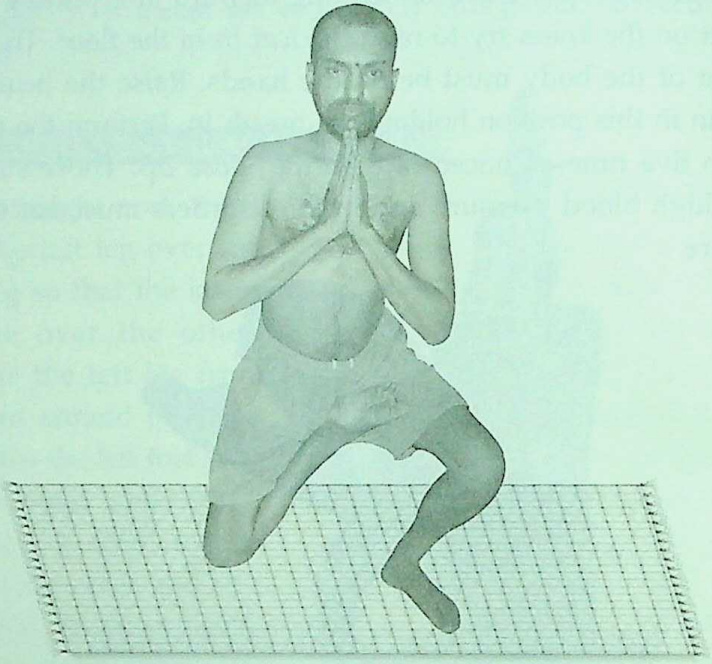
Benefit It removes mental tension and worries. It makes the nervous system stable. It makes the hands and wrists strong.

VĀTĀYANĀSANA (AIR VENTILATING POSE)

Stand straight. Then, bend the right leg and place the right foot at the base of the left thigh as in *ardhapadmāsana*. Join both the palms near the chest. Lower the body by bending the left knee till the right-bent knee rests on the floor. Do not bend the upper torso forward or backward. Slowly, return to the starting position. Repeat by reversing the legs. Inhale in the starting position, hold

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the breath when lowering the body, breathe normally in the final position and exhale when rising up. The hands can also be stretched up through out the practice. Repeat five times with each leg. Concentrate on the *viśuddhi cakra*.



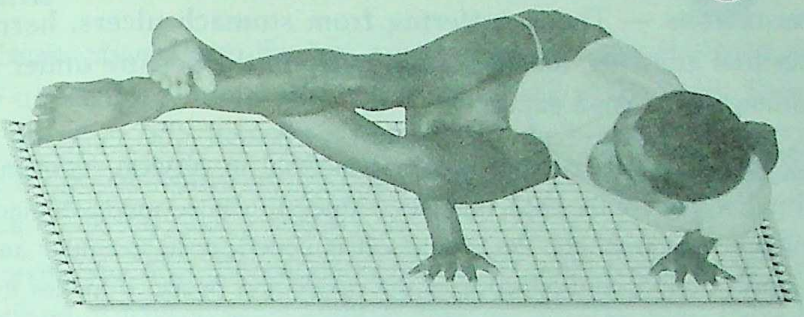
Vātāyanāsana (Air ventilating pose)

Benefits It makes the nerves and muscles of the legs strong and removes wind from the legs. It is very beneficial for diabetics and for maintaining celibacy.

AṢṬĀVAKRĀSANA (EIGHT CURVE POSE)

Stand, straight with the feet about two feet apart. Bend the knees and sit on the haunches. Place the right palm on the floor between the two legs. Place the left palm near the left leg about two feet apart from the right palm. Balancing on both palms extend the two legs towards the right and cross (overlap) the feet over each other. Then, try to raise the legs from the floor. The right thigh can rest on the right elbow. This is the final position. Return to

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Aṣṭāvakrāsana (*Eight curve pose*)

the starting position and, then, repeat reversing the position. Breathe normally. Concentrate on the *ājñā cakra* or the *svādhiṣṭhāna cakra*.

Benefits This posture tones all the cells and nerves of the body.

POSTURE, PERFORMED LYING ON STOMACH

BHUJAṄGĀSANA (COBRA POSE)

Lie on the stomach with the legs extended straight behind you keeping them two feet apart. Point the toes downwards. Place the palms on the floor on both sides of the chest. Let the forehead touch the floor. The body should be relaxed. Then, pushing the floor with the palms, raise the head and the chest from the floor. Inhale, when doing this. Draw the head back, as much as you can. The entire weight of the body must be on the hips and not on the palms. The palms should be used only to support and one must push from the waist upwards. Do not stress the spine or the back too much. The upper torso from the waist to the head must be bent in an arc. Remain in the final position holding the breath in for as long as you can. Then, exhaling, slowly, return to the starting position. During the entire sequence, keep the lower part of the hips, still. For spiritual benefits concentrate on the *ājñā cakra* and for physical benefits concentrate on the breathing or the *maṇipūra cakra*.

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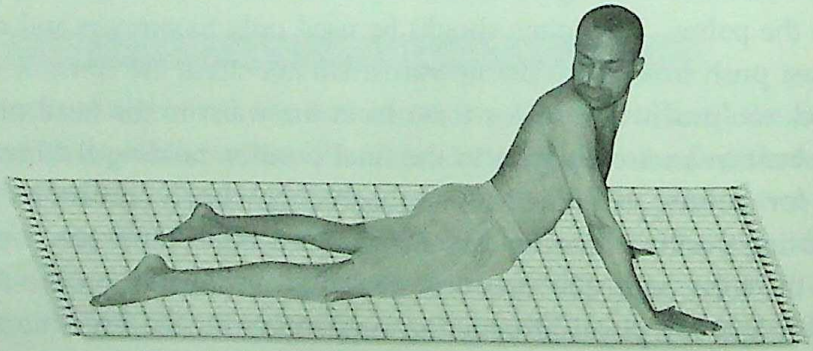
Precautions — Those suffering from stomach ulcers, hernia, intestinal ailments, tonsils should perform the posture under the guidance of a Yoga expert.

Benefits This posture is very beneficial in cervical problems, slip disc, pain of the back, diabetes, kidney ailments, cough, stomach ailments, asthma, etc. For women, it is beneficial in irregular and painful periods and ailments of the womb and ovary. It makes the spinal column flexible, healthy and strong. It is very good for aspirants as it helps in activation of the *kuṇḍalinī* and keeping the intestines clean.

Alternative 1 — Sphinx pose — Lie on the stomach and, instead of placing the palms on the floor, place the upper arms only on the floor, on both side of the head. Inhaling, deeply, raise the head and the upper torso from the navel up as much as you can. Remain in the final position, holding the breath, for as long as you can. Exhaling slowly, return to the lying position. Repeat five times.

Alternative 2 — Snake pose — Lie on the stomach and place the hands behind the back. Hold the wrist of one hand with the other. Laying stress on the back and the hands, raise the head and chest off the floor. Draw the head back. The rest of the steps are same as *bhujaṅgāsana*.

Alternative 3 — Twisted cobra pose — Assume the final position



Tiryaka Bhujaṅgāsana (Twisted cobra pose)

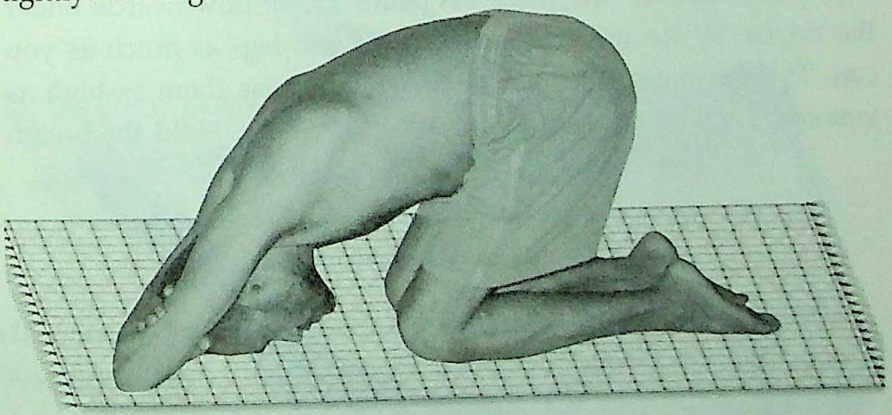
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of *bhujaṅgāsana*, keep the legs a foot apart. Turning the head and the upper torso to one side, try to look back at the heels. Repeat for the other side. Repeat ten times. Hold, the breath when turning the head, backwards; everytime before you change the side come back to the original position.

Alternative 4 — Complete cobra pose — Assuming the final position of *bhujaṅgāsana* without keeping the legs apart bend the knees. Try to touch the back of the head with the toes. Remain in the final position for some time and, then, return to the starting position.

UTTĀNAPṚṢṬHĀSANA (RAISED BACK POSE)

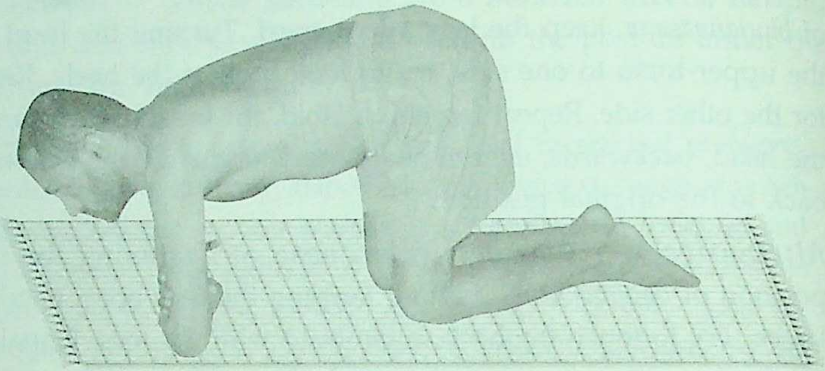
Lie on the stomach with the forehead touching the floor. Raise above the waist and place your hands in front of your chest folding from elbows and with the forearms touching the top of the head, now, hold the elbows with either hand. Then, raise the chest and head and move them forward without moving the hands or legs so that the arms are positioned below the chest. Hold the arms, tightly. The legs from the knees to the toes should also rest on the



Uttānapṛṣṭhāsana **(*Raised back pose*)**

floor. Do not move the elbows and the knees during this posture's practice. Now, push the buttocks up so that the weight of the upper torso is on the hands and the knees. Pull the stomach in and rest the chin and chest on the floor. Then, return to the

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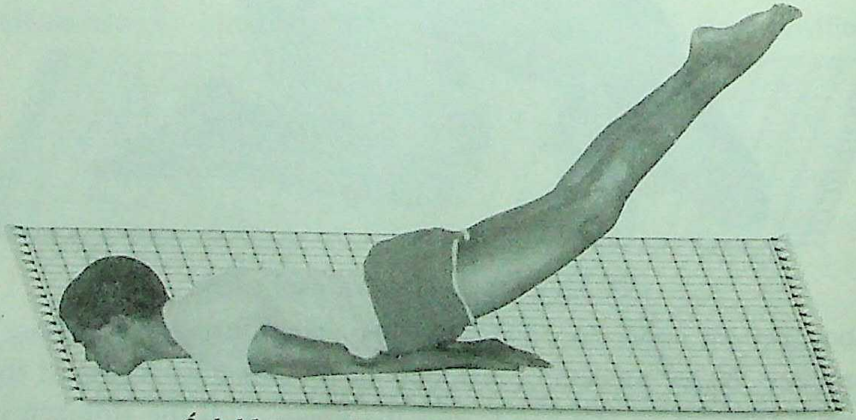
Uttānapṛṣṭhāsana — II

starting position. Repeat ten times. Concentrate on the *anāhata cakra*. Breathe normally or inhale when pushing the buttocks up and, exhale, when lowering the chest and chin.

Benefits This posture is very good for the buttocks, shoulders and back.

ŚALABHĀSANA (LOCUST GRASS-HOPPER POSE)

Lie on the stomach and place the palms facing downwards under the thighs. Inhale and stretch the hands and legs as much as you can. Then, without bending the legs try to raise them as high as you can, keeping the chin and chest on the floor. Hold the breath



Śalabhāsana (*Locust grass-hopper pose*)

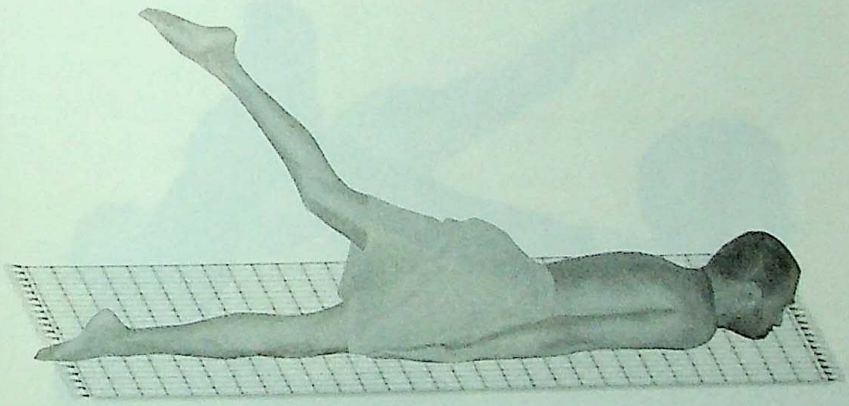
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and remain in this position as long as you can. Exhale and return to the starting position. Repeat five times. Concentrate on the *viśuddhi* or *maṇipūra cakra*.

Precautions — Those suffering from peptic ulcer, hernia, intestinal problems, high blood pressure and heart problems must not practise this posture.

Benefits This posture helps in remedying spinal problems, stomach ailments and imbalance between wind, mucous and bile. It tones the lungs, heart and lower body and makes them stronger.

Alternative 1 — Ardha-śalabhāsana (half-locust pose) — Lie on the stomach as before. Now raise just one leg and then lower it. Next raise the other leg. Do this ten times. The rest of the steps and benefits are similar.



Ardha-śalabhāsana (Half-locust pose)

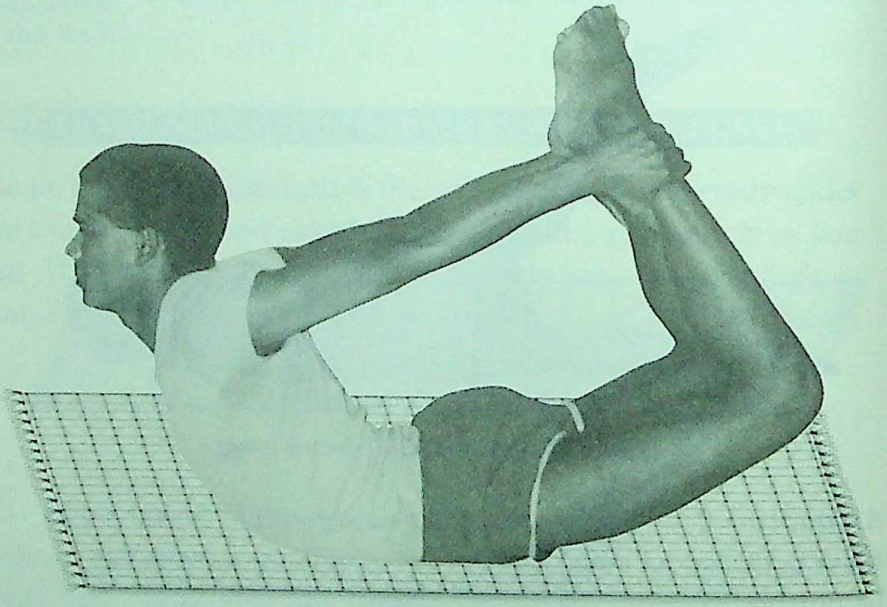
Alternative 2 — Pūrṇa-śalabhāsana (complete locust pose) — Raise both legs as in *śalabhāsana*. Next, without moving the hands or putting pressure on the chin, hand and shoulders, raise the legs higher so that the toes touch the head or the soles of the feet rest on the head. This final pose can be attained only through continuous practice. Do not exert. When returning to the starting position, do not jerk. Lower the legs, slowly. Remain in the final

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position breathing normally as long as you can. Hold the breath, when raising the legs and lowering them.

DHANURĀSANA (BOW POSE)

Lie on the stomach. Bend the legs from the knees. Hold the ankles from behind the back and pull the feet. The hands should be straight so that the leg muscles are stretched. Along with the thighs, also, raise the chest and head from the floor as high as you can. Draw the head, backwards. With the body drawn like a bow in this position, rock, back and forth. In the final position, hold the breath. Repeat five times. Concentrate on the *viśuddhi cakra* or the *anāhata cakra* for spiritual benefit and on the *svādhiṣṭhāna* or *maṇipūra cakra* for physical benefit.



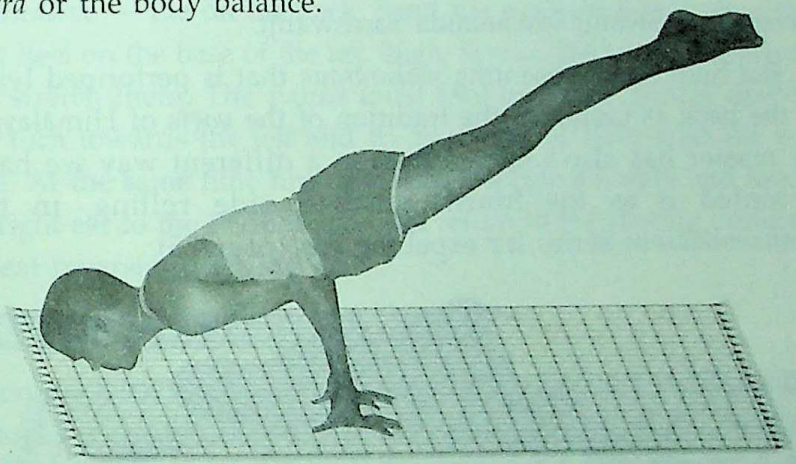
Dhanurāsana (*Bow pose*)

Benefits This posture is very beneficial for curing constipation, weak digestion, indigestion and weakness of liver. It helps shed fat and tone up the ribs and intestines.

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MAYŪRĀSANA (PEACOCK POSE)

Sit on the haunches and place the palms on the floor from between the knees. With the elbows together or close, place them on the lower part of the abdomen and slowly bend forward. Balance the weight of the body on the upper arms and the elbows. Stretch the legs backwards into the air so that the entire body is parallel to the floor. The entire body must be balanced on the palms. Remain in this position as long as you can. Slowly, return to the starting position. Exhale, when raising the body on the elbows and arms. Remain, without breathing in the final position and inhale, when returning to the starting position. In the final position, one can also breathe, normally, but take care, lest this posture may creat many problems related to stomach. Connectrate on the *maṇipūra cakra* or the body balance.



Mayūrāsana (*Peacock pose*)

Benefits For benefiting maximum from *mayūrāsana*, take care of two things. For, at least, two weeks stop consuming milk, fat products, meat, alcohol, intoxicating things and heavy food that takes long time to digest or is, too spicy. Secondly, consume green leafy vegetables, fruits, green vegetables, rice and other easily digestible food. Also, every week perform *śaṅkha prakṣālana kriyā* and *kuñjala kriyā*.

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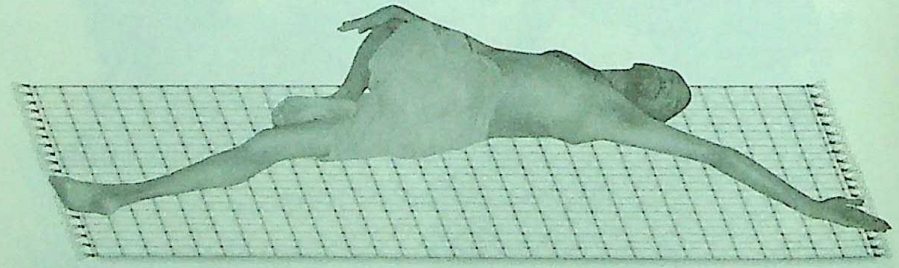
After having freed the body, thus, of toxic substances, practise this posture. This posture makes the body strong, robust and prepares the body for activation of the *kuṇḍalinī*. It is a panacea for boils, acne and all types of skin diseases. It is also beneficial in stomach ailments, particularly, in diabetes. It maintains balance between wind, mucous and bile — the three humours. *Haṁsāsana* and *lolāsana* are performed through this posture.

POSTURE PERFORMED BY LYING ON THE BACK

MAKARĀSANA II (CROCODILE POSE)

In the meditative postures part we presented *makarāsana*-I (page 87) under the relaxation postures series as taught by my master Paramhansa Swami Satyananda Saraswatiji.

But here I am presenting *makarāsana* that is performed lying on the back as taught in the tradition of the *yogī*s of Himālayas. My master has also referred to it in a different way we have presented it as the fourth practice, side rolling, in the *pavanamuktāsana* series for expelling gas (page 75).



Makarāsana II (Crocodile pose)

Lie on the back. Keep the ankles and the feet together. Bend the knees and bring the heels to touch the buttocks and let the feet hover a bit above the floor. Spread the hands on both sides of the body in level with the shoulders. Now inhaling deeply turn the knees towards the right and the head towards the left. The left

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ear and the right knee must touch the floor. Exhale and return to the starting position. Repeat reversing the sides. Repeat ten times. Concentrate on *svādhiṣṭhāna cakra*.

During the entire posture the sole must not touch the floor. When turning the knees try to touch the floor with that side's knee. Do not move or raise the hands. Try to twist the spine when turning so as to produce a stretching sensation in it.

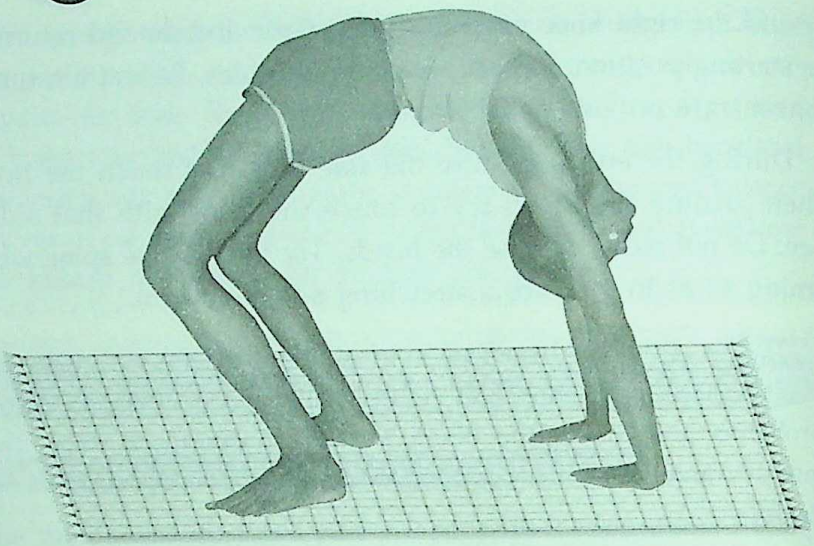
Benefits It is very beneficial in breathing problems and diabetes. It also cures indigestion and stomach ailments. It remedies spine problems and makes the blood pressure balanced. It tones the muscles and the nerves and makes the entire body robust and flexible.

Alternative — Lie on the back. Bend the right knee and place the right heel on the base of the left thigh. Spread the hands sidewards and stretch them. The palms must face upwards. Inhale deeply and turn towards the left and try to touch the floor with the left knee. At the same time turn the head towards the right and touch the right ear to the floor. Exhale and return to the starting position. Repeat reversing the side.

CAKRĀSANA (WHEEL POSE)

Lie on the back and bend the knees. Position the heels close to the buttocks with the soles of the feet resting on the floor. The feet must be side by side in line and half feet to two apart. Bend the arms and place the palms on the floor, on either side of the head, so that the elbows point upwards and the fingers point towards the shoulders. Inhale deeply and holding the breath, raise the upper torso on the hands and the legs. For this, move the arms and legs close to each other and arch the back as high as possible. Remain in this position for a few moments holding the breath. Exhaling, slowly, return to the lying position. In the final position, try to bring the legs and hands, closer. One can remain, in the final position, breathing normally.

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Cakrāsana (*Wheel pose*)

Concentrate on the *maṇipūra* or *svādhiṣṭhāna cakra* or the breathing.

Precautions — Those suffering from high blood pressure, heart disease, stomach ulcers, intestinal disorders, bone problems, eye problems and hearing problem should not practise this posture.

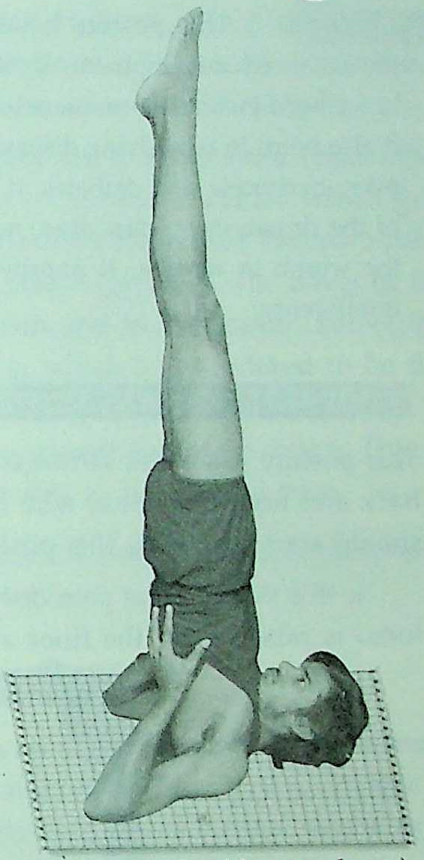
Benefits This posture is beneficial for nerves and the glands. It also helps to remedy reproductive disorders in women. It also cures headaches and migraine. It is very beneficial in paralysis. It removes physical and mental weaknesses.

SARVĀṄGĀSANA (SHOULDER-STAND POSE)

Lie on the back. Place the hands on the sides with the palms open. Place the palms on the hips at the back and with the support of the hands raise the legs straight up, slowly. For this, push the elbows on to the floor supporting the lower back with the hands. The upper torso and the legs should be perpendicular to the neck. Maintaining the balance, remain still in this position. Keep the back straight and touch the chin to the chest. Inhale, in the beginning and, hold the breath in, while raising the feet and upper

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torso into the air. In the final position, one can breathe, normally. Hold the breath, when coming down. For spiritual benefits, concentrate on the *viśuddhi cakra* and for physical benefits, concentrate on the thyroid gland or the breathing.



***Sarvāṅgāsana* (Shoulder-stand pose)**

Beware — Those suffering from high blood pressure, heart problems, problems related to thyroid gland, liver problems, etc., should not practise this posture.

Alternatives — Remaining in this posture, one could stretch the legs up, perform *mūla bandha* and *jālandhara bandha* or slowly take the feet towards the head without bending the legs, keeping them parallel to the floor or perform *padmāsana*, keeping legs up erect, bend the knees, keeping the legs straight up in the air and move the legs sideways and adepts can perform *kandharāsana*, etc.

Precautions — One should remember not to jerk the body or any part, when practising the posture. When coming down, first, let the back touch the floor and, after remaining in this position, for a few seconds, one should allow the legs to touch the floor. This should be more beneficial. Do practise *matsyāsana* after *sarvāṅgāsana*.

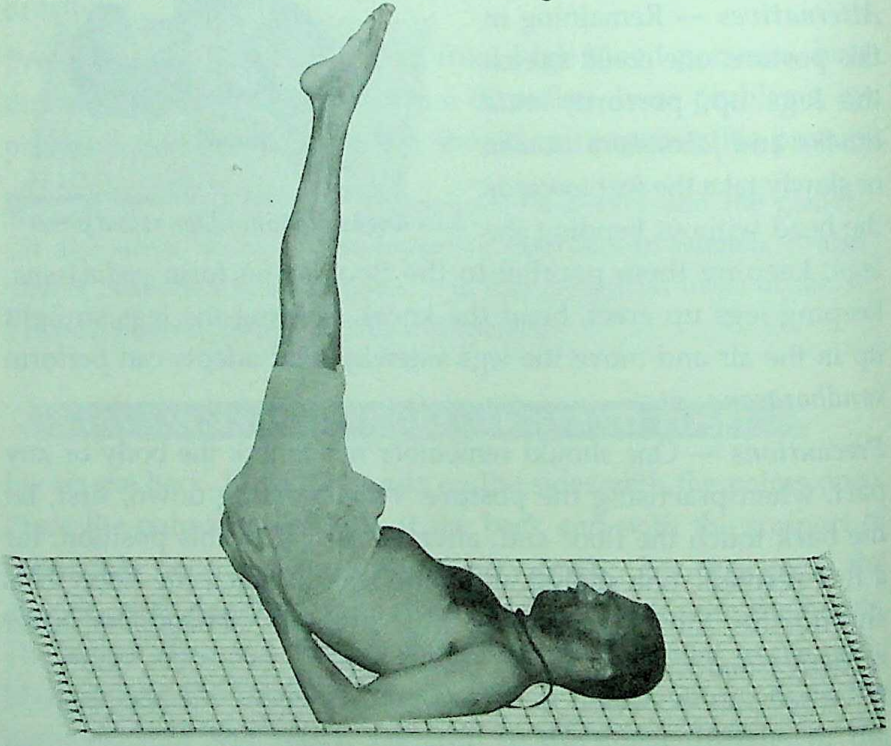
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Benefits This posture benefits the entire body and helps in the balanced development of the body. As the blood circulation in the head increases, it removes mental and psychological disorders. It also helps in remedying diseases like asthma, cough, elephantasis, piles, hydrocele and diabetes. It proves very beneficial in ailments of the throat, eyes, ears, nose, nocturnal emission and problems of the womb in women. It improves the memory and enhances the intelligence.

VIPARĪTAKARAṆĪ MUDRĀ (REVERSE POSE)

This posture resembles *sarvāṅgāsana* but is easier. Those with stiff back and neck and those who cannot make their backs straight should start practising this posture, in the beginning.

In this posture, the chin does not touch the chest. The upper torso is raised from the floor at an angle of 45º from the floor



Viparītakaraṇī Mudrā (Reverse pose)

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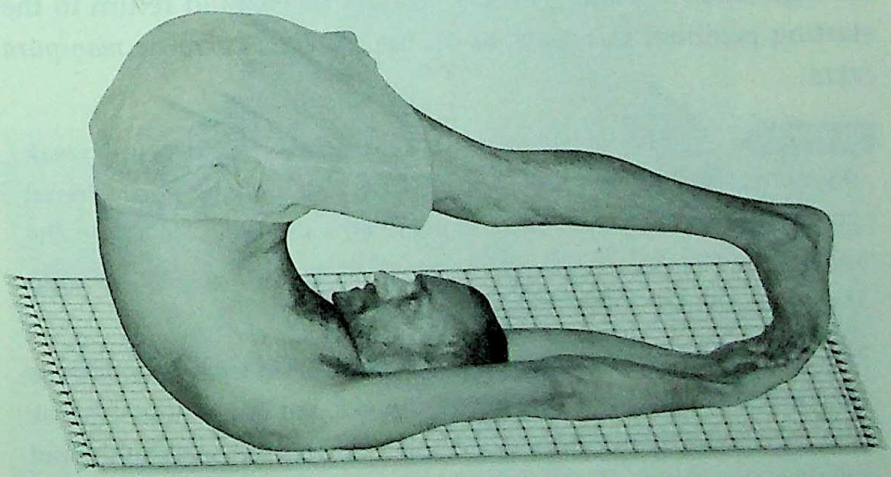
instead of perpendicular as in *sarvāṅgāsana*. This posture is very helpful in the activation of the *kuṇḍalinī*. The process of breathing, concentration and benefits are the same as in *sarvāṅgāsana*.

Additional benefits of this pose are that the *amṛta* (elixir) that is produced by the *lalanā cakra* — the moon centre which gets destroyed on reaching the stomach by the fire of *maṇipūra cakra* — is preserved. This pose is a *mudrā* (gesture). The navel in the body is considered to be the sun and in the mouth above the small tongue is the *lalanā cakra*, which is considered to be the moon. In this pose, the position of the sun and the moon is reversed, i.e., the sun becomes up and the moon down. This is why it is called *viparītakaraṇī-mudrā* or the reverse pose.

Benefits This pose is beneficial in acidity, anaemia, diabetes, mental problems and sex problems.

HALĀSANA (PLOUGH POSE)

Lie on the back. Place the hands on the sides touching the buttocks. Stretch the legs. Keep the toes and the ankles together. Breathe in deeply and keeping the legs straight and exhaling slowly raise



Halāsana (*Plough pose*)

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the legs into the air. Do not use the support of the hands but exerting pressure on the stomach muscles, raise the legs. Take the feet behind the head and touch the toes to the floor without bending the legs. The back shall also rise off the floor in the final position and the chin shall push into the chest. Thus *jālandhara bandha* shall be automatically performed.

Place the hands on the back and supporting the upper torso with them, remain in this position, performing the *bandha* (without breathing) or breathing normally. Then, return to the starting position. Take care that, when doing so, breathe in and hold the breath. Then, let the back come down to the floor, slowly. After the back fully rests on the floor stop for a few seconds in this position and, then, slowly bring the legs down to the floor. Repeat five times, if you can. But do not overdo.

Altenative Complete plough pose — In the final position, one should stretch the legs backwards over the head as much as one can and try to hold the toes with the hands without bending the legs.

Those who find it difficult to perform this posture should only raise the feet up, perpendicular to the upper torso and spread the legs. After remaining in this position one should return to the starting position. Concentrate on the *viśuddhi cakra* or *maṇipūra cakra*.

Benefits This *āsana* helps in reducing fat, improving weak digestion, making the stomach relaxed and making the adrenal glands and the kidneys toned. It also helps the bones to retain the calcium and makes all the glands active. It expels the stale air from the lungs. It also cures infertility in women.

For full benefit, one should perform *halāsana* and *paścimottānāsana* together in rhythm for three to five minutes. But one should practise like this, only if the spine is flexible. Otherwise, one should not practise this *āsana*, as there could be more harm than benefit.

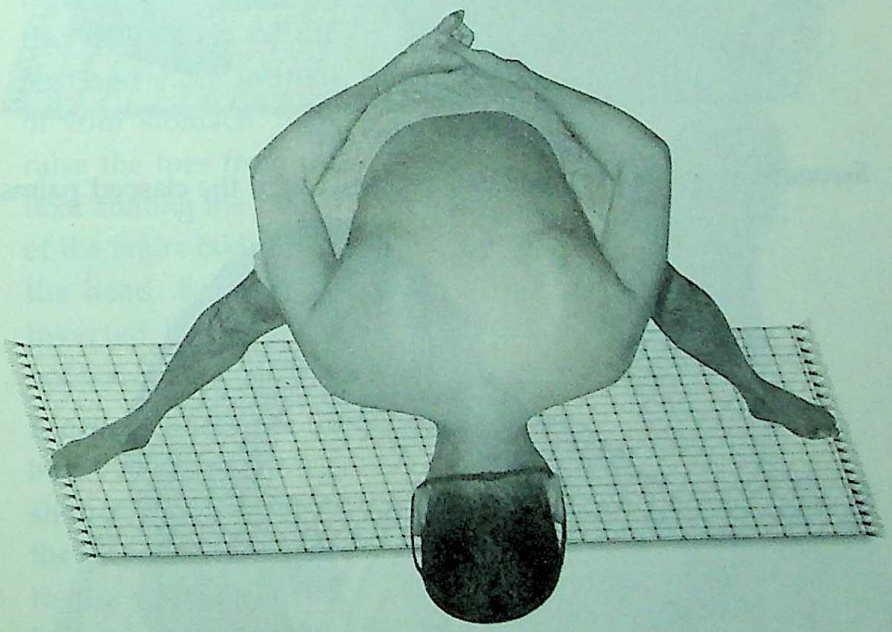
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Precautions — Old and weak people with high blood pressure, heart problems, sciatica and slip disc must not practise this posture.

POSTURES PERFORMED BY RESTING ON HEAD

MŪRDHĀSANA (THE CEREBRAL POSE)

Stand straight with the feet three to four feet apart. Bend forward from the waist. Place the palms on the floor about 2 ft apart. Place the head in between the two palms. This is the first position. In the next position, place the hands behind the back and clasp them. Then raise the heels from the floor, not the leg and balance the body on the toes and the head. Remain in this position for some time and then return to the original position. Repeat five times. Hold the breath in, when coming back to the original position. In the final position, breathe normally. Concentrate on the *sahasrāra cakra* or the breathing.



Mūrdhāsana (*The Cerebral pose*)

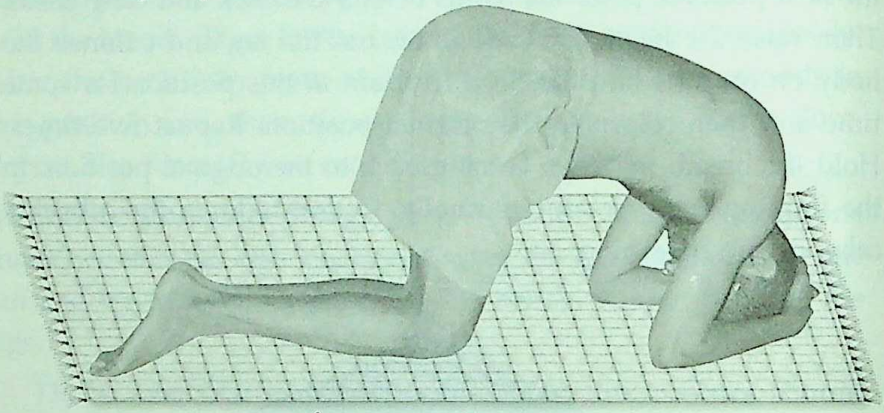
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Benefits It prepares the head to bear the entire weight of the body and the brain to bear the extra inflow of blood into it.

ŚĪRṢĀSANA (HEAD STAND)

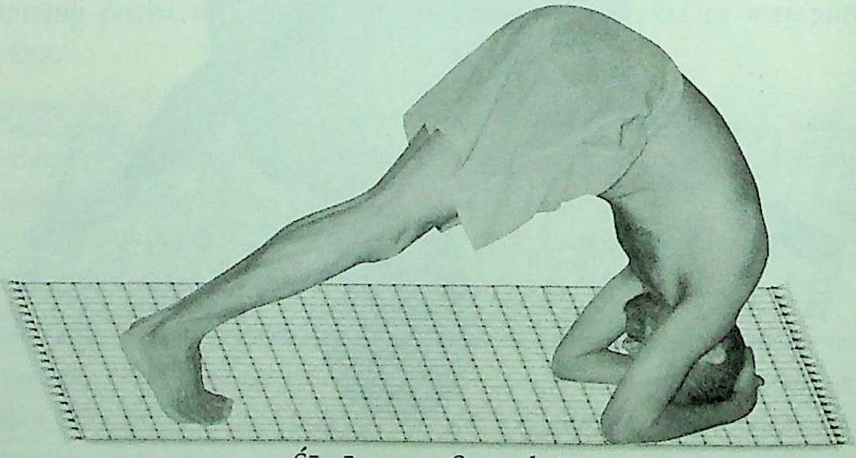
Practice — This posture should be practised in six steps.

First step — Sit in *vajrāsana*. Bend forward and place the elbows on the floor in alignment with the shoulders. Clasp the palms and place them on the floor. Position the top of the head adjacent to the clasped palms on the floor.



Śīrṣāsana — First step

Second step — Support the head, properly, with the clasped palms



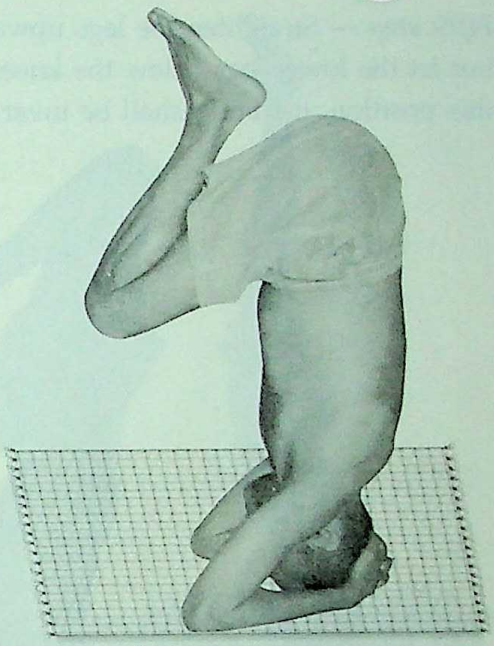
Śīrṣāsana — Second step

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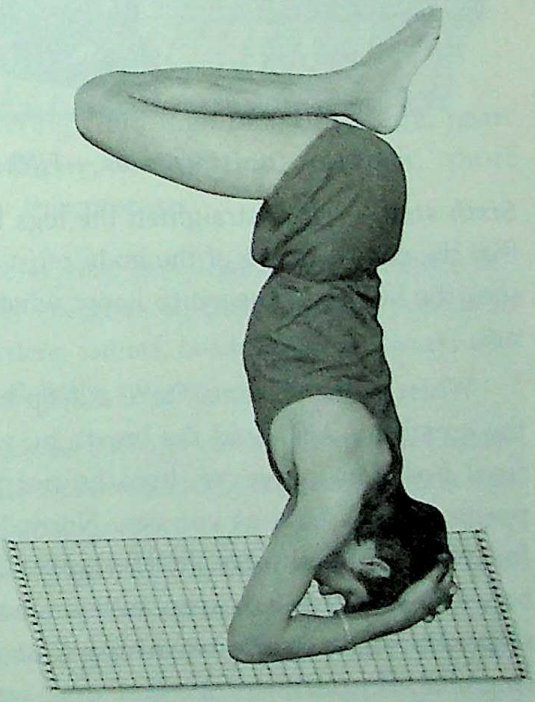
so that they could bear the weight and the body might not fall backwards. Keeping the toes on the floor raise the knees. Straighten the legs without moving the toes and start to shift the weight of the body on to the head.

Third step — Bend the knees and bring the toes close to the head. Keep the back straight. Push the thighs towards the stomach and lower part of the chest by folding the lower part of the legs and place in front of your stomach. Now raise the toes from the floor shifting the weight of the entire body on to the head. Balance the inverted body on the head and the hands.

Fourth step — Raise the buttocks. The bent legs shall move away from the body and be parallel to the floor risen up. Maintain the balance.



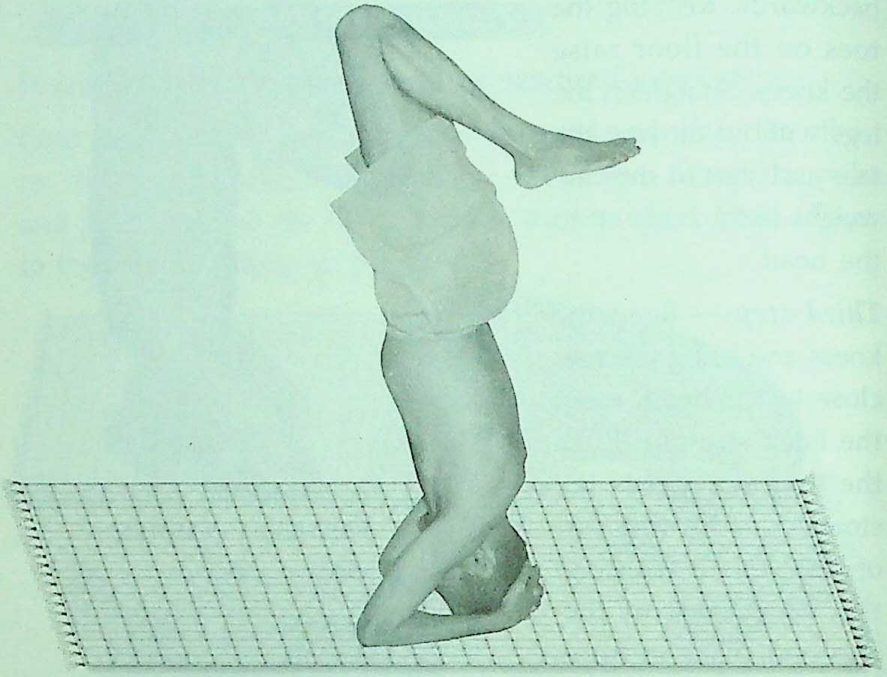
Śīrṣāsana — Third step



Śīrṣāsana — Fourth step

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Fifth step — Straighten the legs upwards into perpendicular form but let the lower legs below the knees remain in bent position. In this position, the body shall be inverted and straight.

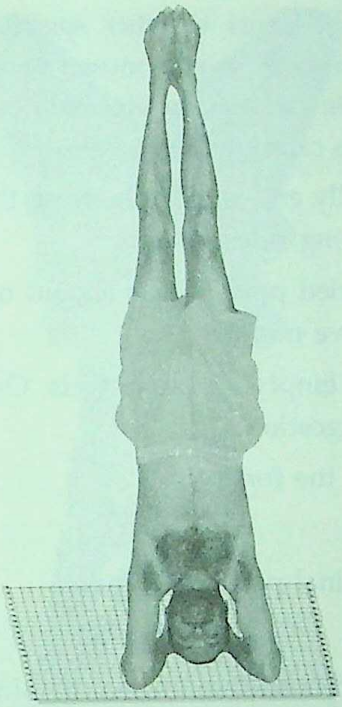


Śīrṣāsana — Fifth step

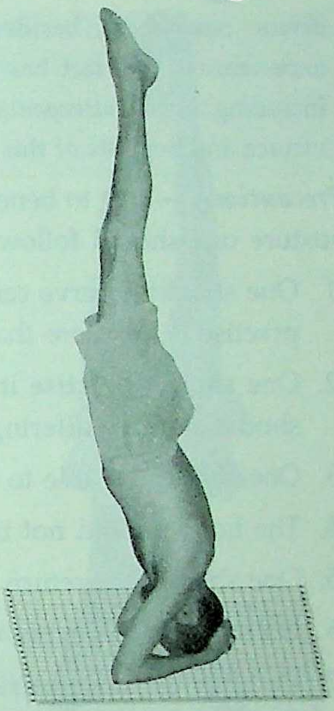
Sixth step — Now straighten the legs from below the knees. So that the entire weight of the body must be on the head. One could seek the help of someone to know whether the body is straight or not.

When in the *vajrāsana*, take a deep breath and start by holding the breath in. Also hold the breath in, when coming down. In the final position, however, breathe normally and remain in this position for as long as you can. Normally, one could practise this for one to five minutes. But for spiritual benefit practise should be slowly increased upto half an hour. Concentrate on the *sahasrāra cakra* or the breathing and the body balance. After *śīrṣāsana*, do perform *tāḍāsana* and *śavāsana* or there could be bad effects.

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Śīrṣāsana — Sixth step



Side view

Precautions — Those suffering from high blood pressure, heart problems, dizziness, epilepsy, indigestion, cataract, short sightedness should not try this posture.

Benefits This posture is very beneficial for maintenance of celibacy. It rejuvenates and energises all body parts. It remedies several psychological disorders, asthma, headaches, cold, weakness and disorder of glands and body systems.

This posture makes the *kuṇḍalinī* rise and converts the *vīrya* (semen or sexual energy) into *ojas* (spiritual radiance). As a result, it increases the memory and makes the intelligence stronger. With time, i.e., long practice (many years) one will be able to perform *prāṇāyāma* and attain *samādhi* on one's own. After *śīrṣāsana*, one should practise *tāḍāsana* and, then, meditate. This leads to cure of all ailments and also develops one's aural power, experience the *anāhata nāda* (eternal

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divine resonance), besides opening the doors to other spiritual experiences. This fact has been elucidated in several ancient texts, including *Yoga Tattvopaniṣad*. Words, in fact, cannot elucidate the virtues and benefits of this posture. It is called the King of postures.

Precautions — But to benefit, physically and spiritually, from this posture one should follow the following rules, strictly:

1. One should observe celibacy. Married practitioners should not practise it for more than one to five minutes.
2. One should practise it only after emptying the bowels. One should not be suffering from indigestion.
3. One should be able to balance on the forehead.
4. The body should not tremble.
5. One should not return to the original position in jerks.
6. Do not shut the eyes very tight.
7. Perform the posture slowly and concentrate on maintaining the balance.
8. One should have balanced meals and lead a balanced life devoting oneself to spiritualism. In other words, one must keep oneself away from pleasures of the flesh.

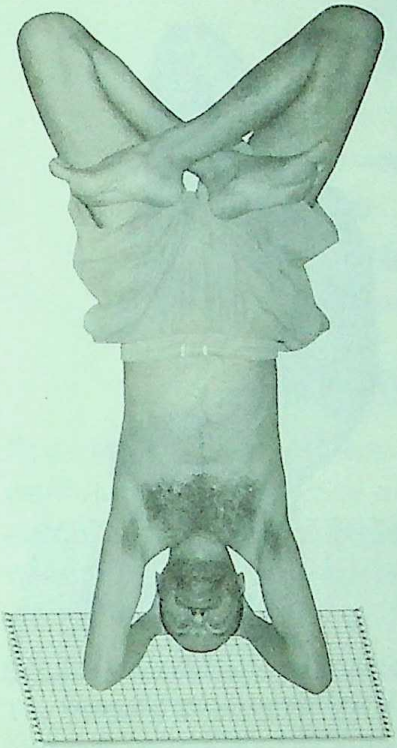
If one does not follow these rules and practises *śīrṣāsana* for a long duration it could result in harm. There could be danger of brain haemorrhage, blindness and going mad. Hence, one should be careful.

Further practice — *Vṛkṣāsana, ardha-vṛkṣāsana, muktahasta-vṛkṣāsana, hasta-vṛkṣasana, ekpāda-vṛkṣāsana, sālamba-śirśāsana* and *nirālamba-śīrśāsana*.

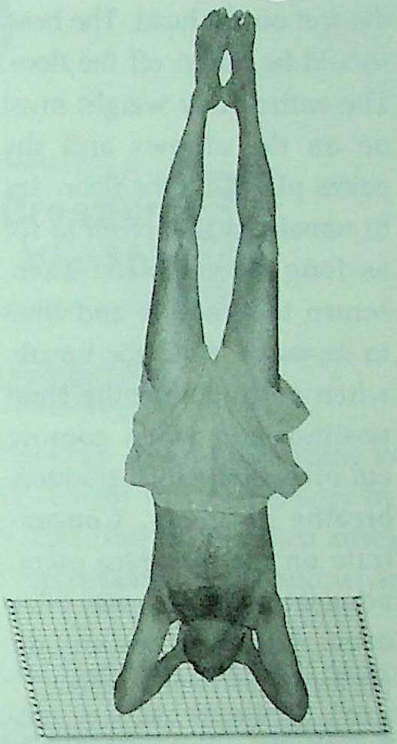
ŪRDHVA-PADMĀSANA (UPRIGHT LOTUS POSE)

Perform *śīrṣāsana*. In the final position, bend the legs and slowly arrange them in the *padmāsana* (lotus pose) posture. Remain in this position for some time and then return to the original position.

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Ūrdhva-padmāsana
(Upright lotus pose)



Kapālyāsana (Skull pose)

KAPĀLYĀSANA (SKULL POSE)

Perform *śīrṣāsana*. Bend the head forward and shift the entire weight on to the forehead. Return to *śīrṣāsana*. Then return to the starting position.

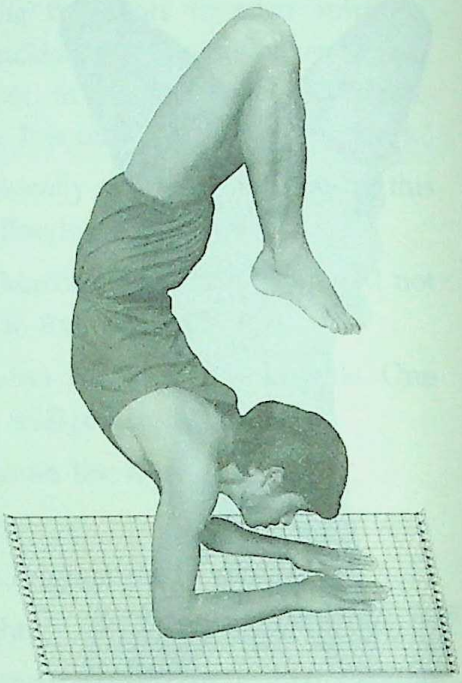
The benefits of these two postures are same as *śirṣāsana*.

VṚŚCIKĀSANA (SCORPION POSE)

In *śīrṣasana*, bend the back and legs, backwards. Unclasp the hands and maintaining the balance of the body, move the elbows, on either side of the head, without lifting them. Bend the legs backwards towards the floor bending your torso little forward. Raise head and look at your palms. If possible, place the soles of

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the feet on the head. The head should be raised off the floor. The entire body weight must be on the elbows and the palms placed on the floor. Try to remain in this position for as long as you can. Then, return to *śīrṣāsana* and then to *vajrāsana*. Hold the breath, when getting into the final position and when coming out of it. In the final position, breathe normally. Concentrate on the *sahasrāra cakra*, *viśuddhi cakra* and *maṇipūra cakra*. After this posture, do perform *paścimottānasana*.



***Vṛścikāsana* (Scorpion pose)**

Benefits This posture tones the entire body and stops it from getting weak. It activates the brain and the pituitary gland. It also has the benefits of *śīrṣāsana*, *cakrāsana* and *dhanurāsana*.

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Science of Breathing (Prāṇāyāma Vijñāna)

INTRODUCTION

Prāṇa means the vital force or life energy and *āyāma* means to control. Hence, *prāṇāyāma* means to control the vital energy by control of breath or the breathing process. But the question arises what is *prāṇa*? What is the need of regulation of *prāṇa* and what are its benefits?

The breathing process goes on in the body, since birth till death. The process of inhaling air and exhaling is called breathing. *Prāṇa* is that inner energy, that is present in all animate and inanimate matter. Hence, the air, we breathe, is different from the *prāṇa*. Air, we take in, has a gross form, while *prāṇa* has a subtle form.

The two bases of this creation are – *ākāśa* (ether) and *prāṇa* (vital life force). Both are omnipresent. The vibrance of the vital life force in the ether led to creation. *Prāṇa* or vital life force is, thus, said to be before the creation of the mind.

The scriptures have elucidated the practice of *prāṇāyāma* for controlling the mind. *Prāṇa* is the omnipresent vital life force that energises and spurs the mind. We take in *prāṇa* through the breath. Taking a deep breath fills the three parts of lungs with *prāṇic* energy. These three parts are the upper part upto the neck, the parts on both sides of the heart and lower parts. Besides this, the *prāṇic* energy even starts to flow to the navel region, when we take deep breath. If we do not inhale-exhale, properly, or if we do not perform *prāṇāyāma*, these parts remain deprived of the vital

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energy. Through the blood, *prāṇic* energy is transferred to all parts of the body. Following are some verses from the ancient texts, that elucidate the importance of *prāṇic* energy.

The *Ṛgveda* states —

dvāvimau vātau vāt ā sindhorāparāvataśca ।
dakṣam te anya āvatu ṣaḍanyo vātu yadrūpaḥ ॥

All living beings that live from the mountains to the ocean, breathe air in two ways only — inhale and exhale. If these are mastered, then, all the six sense-organs will work, harmoniouly.

In the ancient text, *Yogī Yājñavalkya-Saṁhitā* it is said –

prāṇāpāna samo yogaḥ prāṇāyāma itīritaḥ ।
prāṇāyāma iti prokto recaka-pūraka-kumbhakaiḥ ॥
— 6/2

A proper balance of inhalation and exhalation is called *prāṇāyāma*, which is done rythmically in order — inhale, exhale and retention.

Bhagavad Gītā states —

apāne juhvati prāṇam prāṇai apānam tathāpare ।
prāṇāpāngati ruddhvā prāṇāyāma parāyaṇāḥ ॥
— 4/21

Some coinside inhalation into exhalation, some exhalation into inhalation and some do by including retention, too. These are the different ways adopted by expert *prāṇāyāma* practitioners.

Another text *Pātañjala Yoga-Sūtra* states —

tasminsati śvāsa-praśvāsayorgativicchedaḥ
prāṇāyāmaḥ । **— 2/41**

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> After mastering postures, by retention of inhalation and exhalation, one should practice the science of breathing called *prāṇāyāma*.

In fact, all ancient Indian texts, like the Vedas and the Smṛtis, elucidate the importance of *prāṇāyāma*.

There are seven centres in the human body, through which the *prāṇic* energy is transferred into the various parts of the body. These centres are called *cakras*, i.e., psychic centres. If even one *cakra* is in a state of imbalance, the body is stricken by some ailment or the other. *Prāṇāyāma* is important for bringing up and maintaining this balance. In spiritual terms, it is the path to total emancipation.

Although in this physical body, the *prāṇic* energy is in one form, but, according to the different activities in the body, the *prāṇa* divides itself into five main divisions. These are called *pañca prāṇas*. There are further five sub-divisions of *prāṇa*, called the *pañca upaprāṇas*.

The five divisions are *prāṇa, apāna, samāna, udāna* and *vyāna*, while the sub-divisions are *nāga, kūrma, kṛkala, devadatta, dhanañjaya*.

The age, to which a human being can be expected to live, can be determined by the *prāṇic* energy, derived by him through breathing. Those who breathe shallow and quick live a shorter life span in comparison to those who breathe, deep and slow. The ancient *ṛṣis* studied the different animals and came to this conclusion. As snakes, elephants and tortoises have a slow rate of breathing, they have a longer life span. While animals like dogs, rabbits and birds which have a fast breathing rate are short-lived. Hence, through *prāṇāyāma*, one cannot just have physical and spiritual benefits, rather one could enhance one's life span. The following table would show how the rate of breathing has a direct effect on one's life span.

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1. Tortoise	4-5 times per minute	life span – 200 years
2. Snake	7-8 times per minute	life span – 150 years
3. Man	15-16 times a minute	life span – 100 years
4. Horse	20-22 times a minute	life span – 40 years
5. Dog	28-30 times a minute	life span – 14 years

The text, *Svara Yoga*, explains what the effect would be when the exhaled air is thrown out at a certain distance. Normally, in *recaka* or exhalation, the breath, coming out, can be felt at a distance of twelve finger breadths from the nostrils. While *pūraka* or inhalation can be felt ten finger breadths away. If the *recaka* is felt 11 finger breadths away, then, the *prāṇic* energy gets stabilized; 10 finger breadths, one gets peace and happiness; 9 finger breadths, one becomes a poet; 8 finger breadths, one becomes eloquent; 7 finger breadths, one becomes foresighted; 6 finger breadths, one becomes capable of flying in the sky; 5 finger breadths, one can travel at the speed of thought; 4 finger breadths, one gains the eight *siddhi*s or spiritual powers (supra) normal powers; 3 finger breadths, one comes to possess the nine *nidhi*s, i.e., treasures or the keys to worldly prosperity; 2 finger breadths, one becomes capable of assuming several physical forms at the same time; 1 finger breadth, one can become invisible; 1/10th of 1 finger breadth, one conquers death.

In different activities, *recaka* has the following force —

normal state — six finger breadths,
emotional state — 12 finger breadths,
singing — 16 finger breadths,
eating — 20 finger breadths,
walking — 24 finger breadths,
sleeping — 30 finger breadths,
sexual activity and exercising – 36 finger breadths.

All this explanation has been given to make one understand

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the importance of *prāṇāyāma*. One can control the speed and depth of the breathing for physical and spiritual gains.

It is through the *prāṇa*, i.e., the vital life force, that one can form a link between the body and the soul. Hence, *prāṇa* is the link between the gross and the subtle world. A body, without *prāṇa*, is usually declared dead and one could say that the soul has left for the heaven.

First of all, *prāṇāyāma* keeps the body healthy and, secondly, it keeps the mind, still and concentrated. If the *prāṇic* energy keeps flowing, continuously and unhindered, through the *suṣumnā* channel related to *kuṇḍalinī*, then, the path to spiritual progress opens up for the person. *Prāṇāyāma* also increases the sexual power, i.e., the *vīrya śakti*. Through celibacy, pure-balanced diet and *prāṇāyāma*, one could enhance one's mental powers, as well. Through *prāṇāyāma*, even though restricted by the medium of this small physical form, being in this physical body, one can possess all the divine powers of the universe, as it is, and also, in their true form.

Prāṇāyāma affects the entire body system and tones the blood circulation, glandular system, nervous system, *prāṇic* energy channel network, the store of *prāṇic* energy in the body and the subtle body.

SOME IMPORTANT GUIDELINES FOR PRĀṆĀYĀMA

1. One should practise *prāṇāyāma* in an airy, open, well-ventilated place. One should not practise it in a room filled with dust, smoke, dampness, bad odour and rubbish. One should also not try in very fast blowing wind.
2. One should try on an empty stomach or four hours after meals or half an hour before meals.

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3. One should wear clothes according to the season but they should not be very tight.
4. It is best to practise early in the morning. In winters, one could also try at noon or in the evening.
5. Practise *prāṇāyāma* after Yoga postures and before meditation.
6. During *prāṇāyāma*, keep the body relaxed and loose.
7. Sit on a folded blanket, covered with a cotton cloth, for *prāṇāyāma*. Sit in any meditative pose.
8. One can practise more during winters than summers.
9. Do not practise *bhastrikā* and *sūryabhedī*, during summers. In winters, refrain from practising *śītali*, *śītkarī* and *candrabhedī prāṇāyāmas*.
10. Those suffering from asthma, high blood pressure, hypertension and heart problems should not practise *kumbhaka* without the proper guidance of an expert.
11. Do not put extra force on the body, during *prāṇāyāma*. Hold the breath, only as long as it is comfortable. Otherwise, it might create an adverse effect on the lungs.
12. Those practising *prāṇāyāma*, should avoid smoking, tobacco, meat and alcohol.
13. Those with wind humour predominant should not practise *śītalī* and *śītkarī*, those with bile humour dominant should not practise *sūryabhedī* and those with phlegm, predominant, should not practise *candrabhedī prāṇāyāma*.
14. *Sūryabhedī* cures imbalance of wind humour, *ujjayī* cures phlegm imbalance, *śītalī* and *śītkarī* cure bile imbalance while *bhastrikā* cures the imbalance of all the three.
15. One should practise *āsanas* and *prāṇāyāma* after having a bath. Otherwise, one should bathe half an hour after the practice.
16. If one starts sweating, instead of wiping it off with a towel,

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one should massage with the hands and dry it off or let it dry off, naturally.

17. If one is suffering from cold or the nostrils are blocked, then, one should not practise *prāṇāyāma*.

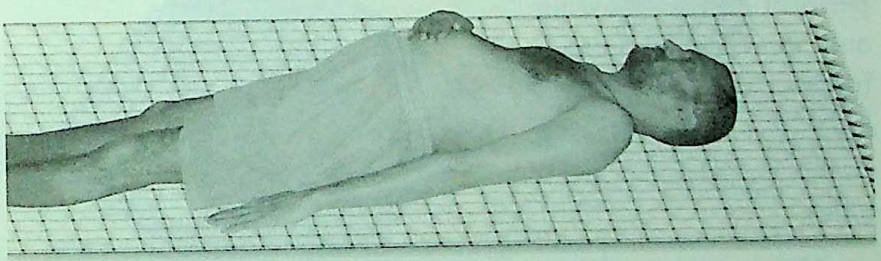
18. One should not break the practice, again and again. Otherwise, the benefits cannot be attained, fully, and will not last long.

For more details regarding precautions, eligibility, methods and fruits of *prāṇāyāma*, one may go through *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā*, chapter 2, verses from 1 to 20 and from 35 to 77.

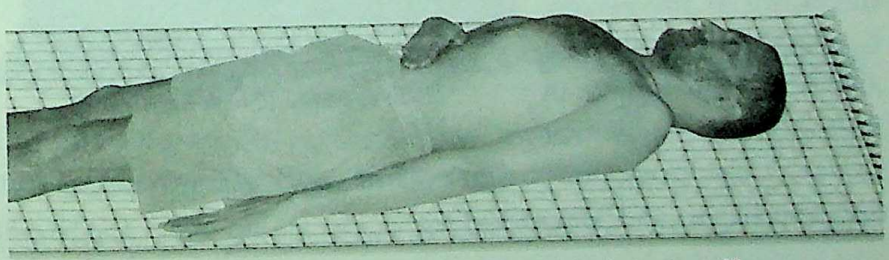
For the practice of *prāṇāyāma*, one should understand the breathing process, properly. Breathing can be of two types — abdominal breathing and chest breathing.

UDARA ŚVASANA (ABDOMINAL BREATHING)

Lie down on the floor on your back like the corpse-pose and place one hand's palm on the navel. Inhale deeply in a way that the abdomen bellows like a balloon and rises. The more the navel



Udara śvasana (abdominal breathing) — stage I



Udara śvasana (abdominal breathing) — stage II

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region rises the diaphragm goes down. Diaphragm is the tissue wall that separates the lungs from the abdomen.

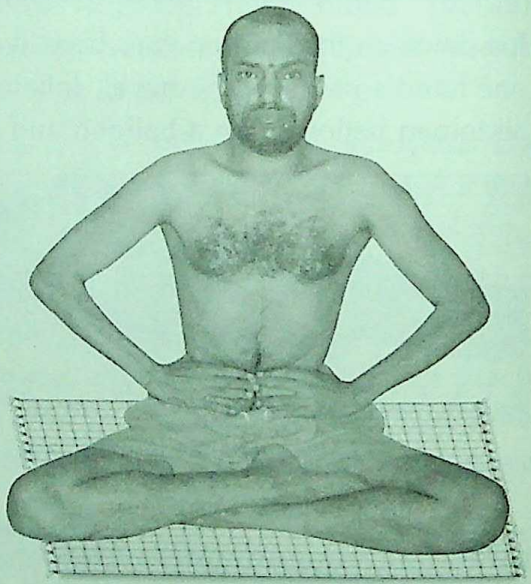
Next, exhale slowly. For this, contract the abdomen and allow the hand on the navel to go downwards, rather push it towards the spine. As the abdominal region contracts, the chest expands.

Keep the chest and shoulders still during the practice. Repeat 10 to 15 times.

URAḤ ŚVASANA (CHEST BREATHING)

Sit with crossed legs or lie down. Expanding the chest, breathe in deeply. If necessary, place the hands on the waist with the thumbs positioned on the back, while the rest of the fingers on your stomach and, then, with the rest of the fingers, press the stomach in.

Exhale i.e. perform *recaka*, allowing the chest to sink in. Inhale i.e. perform *puraka*, allowing only the chest to expand. In this practice, do not expand or contract the stomach. Repeat 5 to 10 times.



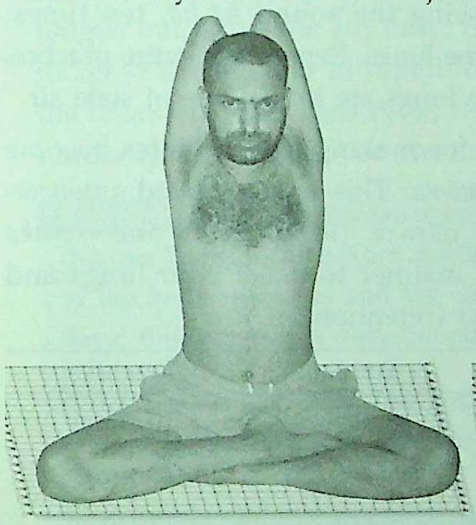
Uraḥ śvasana (*Chest breathing*)

Both the above practices are very good for the health of any person. Generally, as one is not able to breathe, deeply, in this manner in the normal course. These preparatory practices of *prāṇāyāma* are necessary for good health and longevity too.

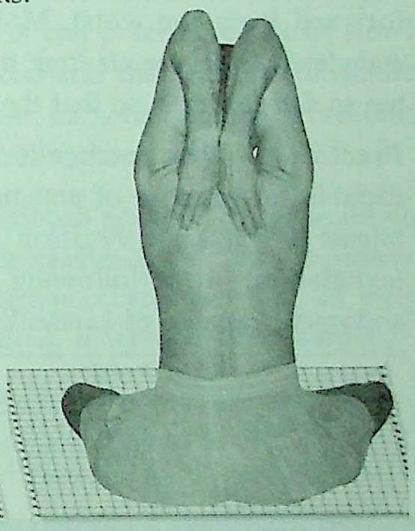
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PŪRṆA ŚVASANA OR YOGIC ŚVASANA (YOGIC BREATHING)

Sitting in any comfortable posture raise the hands above the head and place the arms on the back from above the shoulders. Push back the elbows by your head. Thus, the ribs will be stretched and the chest will expand to the maximum. Expanding both the chest and the abdomen, fill the lungs with air, performing *pūraka*. After this, relaxing the abdomen and the chest, perform *recaka* or exhale. In the end, by pressing the abdomen and contracting the chest, expel all the air present in the lungs. The entire practice should be rhythmic and not in jerks.



Pūrṇa śvasana (*Yogic breathing*)



Pūrṇa śvasana — back view

Prāṇāyāma is described in two parts here, (a) Preparatory practices of *prāṇāyāma*, (b) *Prāṇāyāma*.

PREPERATORY PRACTICES OF PRĀṆĀYĀMA

One should not practise *prāṇāyāma* without first cleansing the lungs. One could do this through three easy practices.

Practice 1 – Sit on the floor or stand straight. Keep the back straight. If seated, place the hands on the floor and, if standing, place them on the thighs. Slowly, raising the hands up, perform

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pūraka or breathe in, deeply. Next, pressing the abdominal muscles inwards, perform *recaka* or exhale, bringing the hands down.

Practice 2 – Stand straight, raise the hands above the head and inhale deeply, expanding the abdomen. Then, bringing the hands down and pressing the abdomen inwards, exhale. The hands should be crossed like scissors when raised and even when they are lowered.

Practice 3 – Stand straight and keep the feet two to three feet apart. Raise the hands above the head, keeping the palms, facing the floor and, breathe in, deeply. Next, exhaling, slowly, bend forward from the waist. Making the sound *hā hā*, ten times, completely expel the air from the lungs. Repeat this entire practice, ten to fifteen times, so that the lungs are totally free of stale air.

Practice 4 – This practice is for making new initiates become capable for practise of *prāṇāyāma*. This is also called *anuloma-viloma prāṇāyāma*. Perform *pūraka* (inhalation) and *recaka* (exhalation) in the following manner to make your lungs and abdomen, capable of *kumbhaka* (retention).

	Pūraka	*Recaka*	*Repetition*
1st week	5 seconds	5 seconds	10 times
2nd week	6 seconds	6 seconds	10 times
3rd week	7 seconds	7 seconds	10 times
4th week	8 seconds	8 seconds	10 times
5th week	9 seconds	9 seconds	10 times
6th week	10 seconds	10 seconds	10 times

	Pūraka	*Kumbhaka*	*Recaka*	*Times*
7th week	5 seconds	10 seconds.	5 seconds	5 times
8th week	5 seconds	10 seconds.	10 seconds	10 times

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THE PRĀṆĀYĀMA PRACTICES

PLĀVINI PRĀṆĀYĀMA (FLOWY BREATHING)

Sit in *padmāsana* (lotus pose) or any comfortable posture with both palms resting on the knees. Keep the spine and the neck straight. Open the mouth in the form of a ring and sip the air in through mouth until the abdomen is blown up and full like a balloon. When it is not possible to drink in any more air, close the mouth and hold the air in, for as long as you can. Next, exhaling through the nose, perform *uḍḍīyāna bandha* or extending the tongue out, expel the air, fully. As you practise regularly, slowly, increase the number of repetitions and the duration of holding the breath-in. After each cycle, rest, for some moments, breathing, normally. Concentrate on the *svādhiṣṭhāna cakra*.

Benefits This is an alternative to *kuñjala* practice. When the season changes (during March-April and September-October) the bile humour in the body increases and the digestion becomes weak. In these days, this practice is very beneficial. It removes bile disorders.

If one practises it, daily, one gains the power to float in water and remain healthy without food for many days at a stretch.

KAPĀLABHĀTI PRĀṆĀYĀMA (SKULL BREATHING)

Kapāla means skull, *bhāti* means to clean. After the cleansing of lungs, it is necessary to clean the skull with its content brain. The *ṛṣi* Patañjali stated —

praccardanavidhāraṇābhyām vā prāṇasya ।
— 1/34

Sit in any meditative pose and, closing the eyes, relax the whole body. In this *prāṇāyāma*, you have to remember that you will be stressing on exhalation, while breathing and not on inhalation.

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Inhale, normally. But when exhaling, stress to expell the air. One has to exhale forcefully and a number of times. Inhalation takes place, automatically, between two exhalations. Starting from 10, increase the number of exhalations to 60 and, then, 100. At the end of this practice, exhale totally, and perform the three *bandhas* (*uḍḍiyāna*, *mūla* and *jālandhara*) and hold the breath out for as long as you can. Do not open the eyes during the entire practice. Also, do not hold in air during the practice. Only in the end, hold the breath out. Concentrate on the *ājñā cakra* or the *maṇipūra cakra*. Repeat one to ten times and each time increase the duration of *bāhya kumbhaka*, external retention.

Benefits This practice prepares one for *bhastrikā prāṇāyāma*. It is one among the *ṣaṭ-karmas* or six steps of *haṭha-yoga*. This practice cleanses the front part of the brain. It also stops *manorājya*, i.e., building castles in air, which means thinking or planning about that which is not possible or idling off time, thinking of the past or futile things, dreaming of future and dreams. The practice of this Yoga brings peace of mind. It is a very good practice for increasing flow of blood in the brain and removing the stale and collected blood. It also purifies the five elements in the body. The brief description of its effects is as follows:

Ailment cured	*Affected part of the body*	*Purified element*
1. Brain tumour, blood clots, inactive brain, tension in brain	Brain	Earth
2. Problems of the spine and white blood cells	Spinal fluid	Water
3. Obstruction in nervous system or slow/ineffective nerves	Nerves, cells, tissues	Fire
4. Problems of skull	Skull	Air
5. Mental imbalance	Subtle energy of brain	Ether or sky

Due to the performance of the three *bandhas* — the *mūlādhāra*, *maṇipūra* and *svādhiṣṭhāna cakras* are activated. It cleanses the

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lungs and the stomach and, hence, frees one from ailments, like asthma, TB, etc. It also activates the *anāhata cakra*. It increases the intelligence and mental powers. It makes the mind peaceful.

Those suffering from heart problems, high blood pressure, stomach tumour, epilepsy, nausea or fainting should not do this posture.

This is a good practice for entering into meditation and for *kuṇḍalinī yoga*.

SŪRYABHEDI PRĀṆĀYĀMA (SOLAR EXPLORATION BREATHING)

Sit in any meditative pose. Keep the back and the neck straight. Position the first two fingers of the right hand at the base of the thumb of the same hand or spreading them upwards close the left nostril with the forefinger of the right hand. Close the eyes and be peaceful. Place the left hand on the left knee in *jñāna-mudrā*. With the right nostril, inhale, slowly and deeply, and feel, that you are filling up *prāṇa* from the toes to the crown of the head. With the right thumb, close the right nostril. Hold the breath. Perform *jālandhara* and *mūla bandha*. After *kumbhaka*, perform *recaka* (exhalation) from the right nostril. Starting from one cycle, go up to ten cycles, each time, increasing the duration of *kumbhaka*. Concentrate on the *ājñā cakra* or *viśuddhi Cakra*.

Benefits This practice activates the *piṅgalā* channel. It removes problems of the throat, tongue and voice. It also cures ailments like blood disorders, skin problems, intestinal worms, indigestion, low blood pressure and brain disorders. It is very good for disorders of phlegm humour. For activation of *ājñā cakra*, *viśuddhi cakra* and *kuṇḍalinī* energy it is very effective. One could overcome physical weakness through it and even conquer death. It is best to practise it in the winters.

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CANDRABHEDĪ PRĀṆĀYĀMA (LUNAR EXPLORATION BREATHING)

This is just the opposite of the earlier *prāṇāyāma*. Sit in *padmāsana* or any other comfortable pose. Keep the back and neck straight. Sit with the eyes closed and in a pleasant mood. Place the left hand on the left knee in *jñāna-mudrā*. Position the first two fingers of the right hand at the base of the thumb of the same hand or spreading them upwards close the right nostril with the thumb of the right hand. Slowly breathe in through the left nostril. Then, with the right forefinger, close the left nostril, too. Hold the breath-in and perform *mūla bandha* and *jālandhara bandha*. Remain in this state for as long as you can, comfortably. Then, exhale slowly, through the left nostril. Starting from one cycle, go up to twenty cycles. Increase the duration of holding the breath in. After each cycle breathe normally, and rest for some moments. It is better to practise it in summers. *Kapālabhāti* and *sūryabhedī* should not be tried by those with high blood pressure. *Candrabhedī* should be avoided by those suffering from asthma, low blood pressure etc. One should concentrate on the *visarga bindu*. This is a psychic centre, situated in between the *sahasrāra* and the *ājñā cakra*s.

Benefits It lowers the heat of the body and cures tireness. It also remedies ailments, like, bile disorder, high blood pressure and Herpes. It activates the *lalanā cakra* (this is a psychic centre, at the root of the small tongue) and *bindu visarga cakra*. Those who cannot maintain celibacy due to overheat in the body are highly benefited from this.

But one must not practise this, too much, or there could be adverse effects.

UJJAYI PRĀṆĀYĀMA (VICTORIAL BREATHING)

Standing straight, lying down, even walking or sitting in any meditative pose, one can practise this *prāṇāyāma*. Close the eyes, lightly, and place the hands on the knees in *jñāna-mudrā*. Perform

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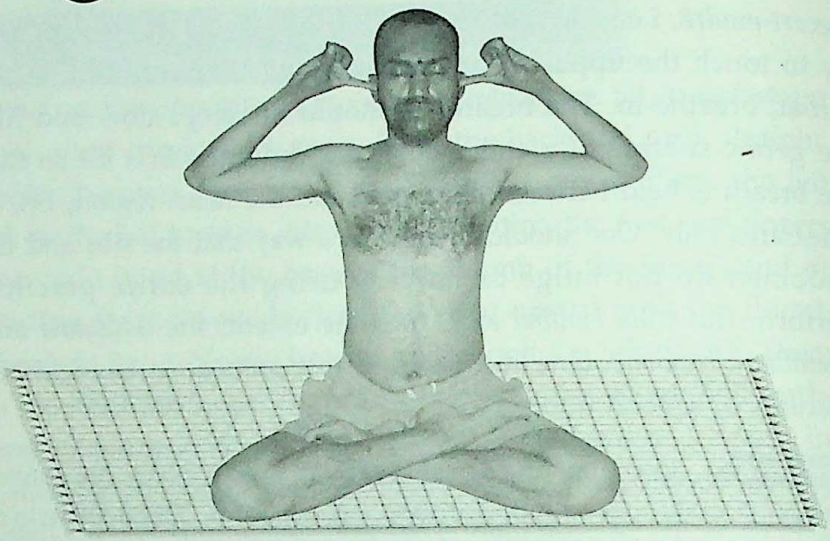
khecarī-mudrā, i.e., turn the tongue backwards in the mouth and try to touch the upper palate. Constricting the voice box in the throat, breathe-in. The breathing should be deep, slow and like the gentle snoring of a child. Push the abdomen in a bit so that the breath is held between the throat and the heart region, i.e., in chest area only. One should breathe in a way that the ribs and the abdomen do not bulge or move. During the entire practice, perform the *mūla bandha* and, to some extent, the *uḍḍīyāna* and *jālandhara bandhas*. One can perform this *prāṇāyāma* from fifteen minutes to several hours.

Benefits Even though easy, this practice subtly affects the entire body. It makes the mind worriless and peaceful. Those suffering from sleeplessness should perform this practice in *śavāsana* (lying on the back) without performing *khecarī mudrā*. It cures several ailments like heart problem, high blood pressure, tonsillitis, cough, sexual problems, *dhātu doṣa* (involuntary night emission), nervous disorder, asthma, *jalodara* (dropsy), TB, pleurisy, ailments of throat, nose and ears, stomach disorders, epilepsy, torpor of the bowels, weak digestion, etc. It remedies overheat in the brain. It increases the radiance of the face and the body. It makes the voice sweet. As the emotions, mental power and physical power get balanced, one enters into deeper meditative state. One can even conquer old age and death through this practice. Hence, it is called *ujjayi*.

BHRĀMARĪ PRĀṆĀYĀMA (BEE BUZZLE BREATHING)

Sit in any comfortable pose. Keep the spine, head, back and neck straight. Close the eyes and leave the body loose. Keep the mouth closed during the entire practice. Breathe in through both the nostrils. For five seconds, perform *mūla bandha*. Relaxing the *mūla bandha* close, both the ears with the forefingers. Keep the mouth closed but the teeth a bit apart. Now, breathe out slowly, humming like a bumble bee. The humming should be continuous. Be aware of the effect of the resonance on the brain. Concentrate on the

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Bhrāmarī prāṇāyāma (*Bee buzzle breathing*)

sahasrāra cakra. Starting from five, increase the number of cycles to as many as you can perform.

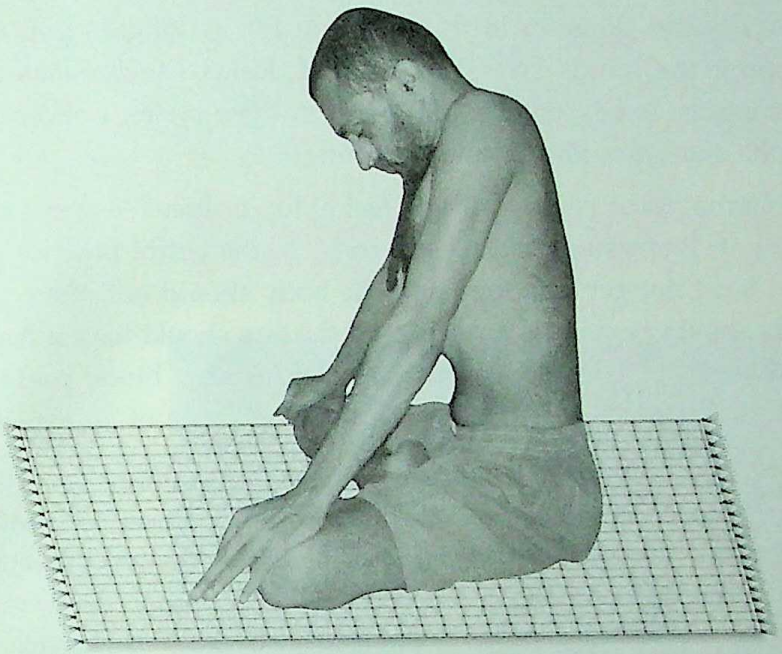
Benefits It cures mental tension, worries, anger, confusion, amnesia and epilepsy. It controls the blood pressure and prevents throat problems. It makes the voice sweet. It makes one aware of the spiritual resonance called *nāda*. It cleanses the blood and bone marrow. It purifies the *vīrya* and makes it rise upwards. It makes the *prāṇic* energy stronger and subtler. It also helps one to enter into *samādhi*.

BHASTRIKĀ PRĀṆĀYĀMA (BELLOWS BLOW BREATHING)

A goldsmith uses a bellow to purify gold. Similarly, for purifying the body of its impurities, we perform *bhastrikā*, in which the breathing is very fast and deep, like a bellow.

First stage — Sit in a comfortable pose. Keep the head, spine, neck and back straight. Close the eyes. Place the left hand on the left knee. Place the right thumb near the right nostril and the ring finger near the left nostril. The forefinger and the middle finger

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Bhastrikā prāṇāyāma (bellows blow breathing)

must be placed on the third eye, i.e., the eyebrow centre with the small finger free. Close the right nostril with the right thumb and then breathe in and out, speedily, twenty times through the left nostril. The speed can be developed in four stages — take the first five breaths slowly, next five with little speed, the next five with high speed and last five with full speed, but remember all the four stages be done, continuously, without break. The abdomen should rise and fall in rhythm with the breathing. Then, inhale deeply and perform *mūla* and *jālandhara bandhas* and hold the breath in for as long as you can. Then, relax the *bandhas* and breathe out. Repeat with the right nostril. One should complete three cycles.

Second stage — Sit in an easy pose of meditation and place the hands, loosely, on the knees. Breathe in and out, speedily, through both nostrils together twenty times letting the abdomen rise and fall in rhythm. Similarly, in four stages as stated before. Then, breathe in, deeply and hold the breath-in. Perform *jālandhara* and

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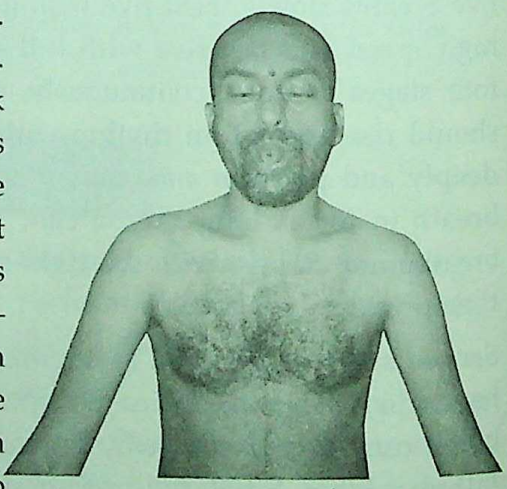
mūla bandhas. Remain in this position for as long as you can, keeping the hands straight and stiff. Relax the *bandhas* and relaxing the hands, breathe out. Perform three cycles. Concentrate on the *ājñā cakra* and on the breathing.

Do not force yourself. If you feel giddy or breathlessness, then know it, that you are doing it wrong. In the entire practice, the face must not get contorted and the body should not move. The body should be relaxed but still, and the face should have a happy look, i.e., not tense. Those suffering from high blood pressure should not practise without the proper guidance of an expert.

Benefits It expels the stale air and micro-organisms from the lungs. It cures asthma, pleurisy, TB and stomach problems. It remedies all throat ailments and removes cough. It is a very good practice for cleansing the *nāḍīs* (nerves and psychic channels). It removes phlegmatic obstructions at the opening of the *suṣumnā* channel. It activates the three glands — *brahma- granthi* (*anāhata*), *rudra-granthi* (*viśuddhi*) and *viṣṇu-granthi* (*ājñā*) — and helps in the activation of the *kuṇḍalinī* energy. It is good to practise this in winters.

ŚITALĪ PRĀṆĀYĀMA (COOL BREATHING)

Sit in any meditative pose. Place the palms on the knees. Keep the spine and the neck straight. Close the eyes lightly. Stretch the tongue out of the mouth and roll it in a way that a channel is formed. Through this pipe — like channel, breathe in deeply and slowly. Hold the breath in and perform *jālandhara bandha*. Try to



Śitalī prāṇāyāma (Cool breathing)

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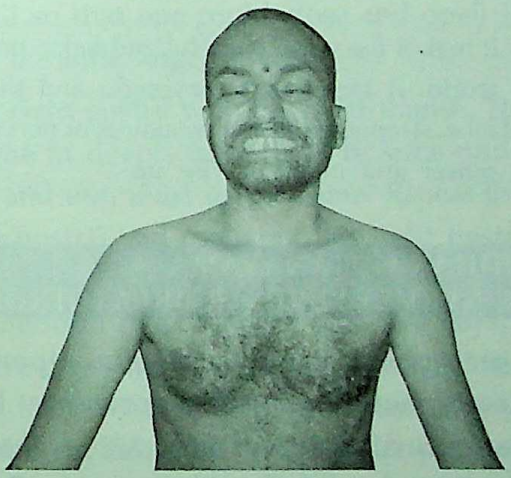
remain in this pose for as long as you can. Then, breathe out, slowly. Start with three cycles and, then, increase, according to requirement. Those suffering from high blood pressure could perform a minimum nine and a maximum sixty cycles. Concentrate on the *anāhata cakra* and the *viśuddhi cakra*.

Benefits It makes the nerves cool and the mind still and peaceful. It reduces the thirst. It removes extra heat from the body. It cures herpes, enlargement of the spleen, wind problem; indigestion, bile disorder, pain due to old ailments, fever, bile in the blood, acidity, mouth sores, problems of the eyes, skin and throat, high blood pressure, etc. Those suffering from phlegm-disorder should practise this Yoga without holding the breath in. It removes toxic substances from the body. It banishes lethargy. It increases physical energy and beauty.

It is to be avoided by those suffering from low blood pressure. It is better to practise this in summers.

ŚĪTKĀRĪ PRĀṆĀYĀMA (COOL-HISSING BREATHING)

It is similar to *śitalī prāṇāyāma*. The only difference is in the position of tongue and the face. Turn the tongue in and touch the



***Śītkārī prāṇāyāma* (cool-hissing breathing)**

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tip of the tongue to the upper palate. Spread the lips in a grinny way so that the teeth are seen. Keep the teeth clenched. Slowly breathe in, deeply through the clenched teeth. A sweet hissing sound should be produced in the process. The rest of the steps are similar to *śītalī prāṇāyāma*.

Benefits All the benefits of *śitalī prāṇāyāma* are accrued. In addition to them, this cures bad breath and pyorrhea.

MŪRCHĀ PRĀṆĀYĀMA (FAINTY BREATHING)

Sit in *padmāsana* or *siddhāsana*. Turn the head back and sit in *ākāśī-mudrā*. Take a long deep breath, slowly. Then, hold the breath in and sit still, performing *śāmbhavī-mudrā*. If needed, push the knees with the hands and make the hands straight so that your back will be erect. Relax the entire body and while relaxing the *mudrā*, breathe out. Mentally, feel peaceful and light. Rest for some time and then repeat. Complete three to five cycles. If one performs the three *bandhas* and increases the duration of holding the breath in, there will be more benefits.

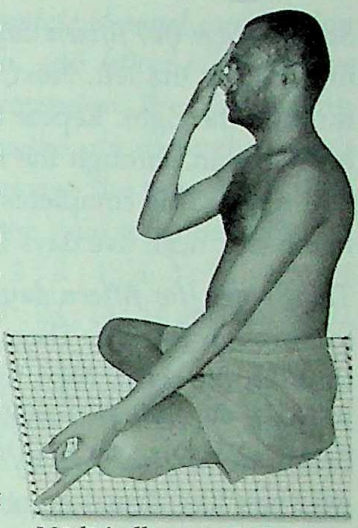
One can practise this before meditation, after yogic postures and before sleep. Concentrate on the *sahasrāra cakra*.

Benefits It makes the mind peaceful and helps one concentrate on the inner world. It increases the eyesight and the memory. It banishes headache, sleeplessness and weakness of nerves. It activates the *kuṇḍalinī* power and makes it rise up.

NĀḌĪ ŚODHANA PRĀṆĀYĀMA (PSYCHIC NERVES PURIFIER BREATHING)

Through the *prāṇāyāmas*, described earlier, a person gains the capability of performing *nāḍī śodhana prāṇāyāma*. In Yoga, there are two ways of purification of the *nāḍī* — *dhauti* and *manu prāṇāyāma*. *Dhauti* has been dealt with in chapter 2 page nos. 42-45

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Nāḍī śodhana prāṇāyāma

Manu prāṇāyāma are also of two types — *samanu* and *nirmanu*. These are also called *sagarbha* and *nirgarbha*. When one chants a *mantra* along with the practice, it is called *samanu* or *sagarbha prāṇāyāma* and when no *mantra* is chanted, it is called *nirmanu* or *nirgarbha prāṇāyāma*. Like, in other *prāṇāyāmas*, these also make the breathing rhythmic. Further, they make the breathing subtle for spiritual gains.

Sit in any meditative pose, except *vajrāsana*. Keep the neck and the spine straight. The eyes should be closed. Place the left hand on the left knee in *jñāna-mudrā*. Relax the entire body and prepare yourself, physically and mentally, for the practice.

First stage (for fifteen days) — Bring the right palm before the face. Place the forefinger and the middle finger on the third eye, i.e., eyebrow centre. During the entire practice, keep them still. Place the thumb near the right nostril and the ring finger near the left nostril so that one could close and open the nostrils, as required. Let the little finger be free.

Close the right nostril with the right thumb. Through the left nostril, breathe in deeply and, then, breathe out. The speed of breathing, in and out, must be the same. Repeat five times. Next, close the left nostril and, opening the right nostril, breathe, in and out, through it. Again, repeat five times. This constitutes one whole cycle. Perform five cycles for first five days, then 15 cycles for the next five days and, lastly, 25 cycles for the last five days. Do not put extra force when breathing, in and out. Do this slowly, calmly only and rhythmically. In the entire practice, there should not be any noise or sound created by you, tension or pain.

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Second stage (*for fifteen days*) — Close the right nostril and breathe in, through the left. Next, close the left nostril and breathe out, through the right. Repeat five times. Now, reverse the sequence breathing in, through the right and, out, through the left. Repeat five times. This completes one cycle. For first five days perform five cycles, next, five days 15 cycles and the last five days 25 cycles.

Third stage (*for fifteen days*) — Close the right nostril and breathe in, through the left. Then, close the left nostril and breathe out, through the right. Next, breathe in, through the right and, out, through the left. This completes one cycle. Mark the duration of breathing, in and out, by chanting *om* mentally or in any other way you like. Equal number of chantings in both cases indicates that both are of same duration. Count the chantings, when breathing, in and out, and do so without any stress. Slowly, increase the duration but both durations must be equal. When doing this, do not stress, tense the body or tire yourself. For example, it would be wrong to count or chant slowly when breathing in and faster when breathing out. Start with 10 cycles and try to raise the number to 25 in fifteen days, as before.

Fourth stage (*until perfection is attained*) — Repeat the breathing, in and out sequence as in the third stage. But now include holding the breath in for some moments without any strain and not forcibly. This is called as *antar kumbhaka*, i.e., inner retention. In the beginning, after breathing in, close both nostrils and hold the breath in to a count of five. Then, breathe out. This completes one cycle. Start with five cycles and go up to 25.

After some days of practice, the ratio of duration of *pūraka* (inhaling), *kumbhaka* (holding breath in) and *recaka* (exhaling) must be raised to 1 : 2 : 2. In other words, if you count up to five when breathing in, count up to ten when holding the breath in and ten when breathing out. Slowly, increase the ratio to 1 : 4 : 2, 1 : 4 : 4, 1 : 6 : 4, 1 : 6 : 6 and lastly, 1 : 8 : 6. After achieving the final ratio, go to the fifth stage.

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Fifth stage (pūrṇa nāḍī śodhana — Complete channel purification for adepts only) — In this stage, also, add *bāhya kumbhaka* or holding the breath out, i.e., external retention. Breathe in with the right, then, hold the breath in, breathe out through the left and then, hold the breath out. Next, reverse the procedure. This completes one cycle. In the beginning, the ratio must be 1 : 4 : 2 : 2. Increase the ratio in this sequence — 2 : 8 : 4 : 4, 3 : 12 : 6 : 6, 4 : 16 : 8 : 8, 5 : 20 : 10 : 10, 6 : 24 : 12 : 12, 7 : 28 : 14 : 14 and last 8 : 32 : 16 : 16.

Be aware of yourself that you should be able to practise complete ten cycles with one ratio without any stress or strain before going on to the next ratio.

In the final stage, during both *kumbhaka*s, i.e., holding the breath in and out perform *jālandhara* and *mūla bandha*s.

For the most adept practitioners, the following ratios can be adopted in order. By this, the Aspirant will be able to perform introversion, i.e., *pratyāhāra* without any obstacles.

	Pūraka	*Kumbhaka*	*Recaka*	*Kumbhaka*	*Cycles*
Normal	8	32	16	16	5
Lower	12	48	24	24	10
Middle	16	64	32	32	as per ability
Higher	20	80	40	40	as you can

The months from September to March are best for increasing the cycles and ratio. In the rest six months keep practising with ratio achieved by the end of March. In summers, practise only in the morning and in winters practise three times — morning, noon and evening. One should maintain celibacy for spiritual gains.

Benefits It opens all channels of *prāṇic* energy. It helps in meditation and *kuṇḍalinī* activation. It removes toxic substances and makes the blood pure. It makes the mind still and peaceful. It activates all centres of the brain. It also enhances the mental power. It is impossible to explain in words the benefits of this *prāṇāyāma*.

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Science of Gestures and Locks (Mudrā and Bandha Vijñāna)

MUDRĀ (GESTURE)

USUALLY, a gesture that reveals what is in the mind is called *mudrā*. But in Yoga *mudrā* means the gesture by which the practitioner links himself to higher souls or God or the super consciousness. Even in Tantra and all Vedic as well as non-Vedic religious rites, this is used to invite the celestial or demi-gods and all offerings, too, are made by gestures. Thus, "Gesture" is a powerful way of tuning oneself to higher states. This is the most powerful way of attracting higher elite souls and Gods towards us. In the highest forms of dance and worship in India, there are gestures and postures, called *mudrā*s to indicate and express the inner feelings and emotions. Similarly, there are *mudrā*s in Yoga for expressing spiritual feelings and emotions.

Through *mudrā*s, the unwanted physical responses are controlled and the *prāṇic* energy in the subtle body is voluntarily activated and made to flow for spiritual benefits.

A practice, that includes a confluence of *āsana*s, *prāṇāyāma* and *bandha*s, is called *mudrā*. Hence, in the science of Yoga, *mudrā*s are very significant. *Mudrā*s play an important role in all spiritual activities from activation of *kuṇḍalinī* to entering into *samādhi*, from detaching oneself from the outer world to turning the senses inwards, from *pratyāhāra*, i.e., introversion to meditation. The text *Gheraṇḍa-Saṁhitā* is the most ancient text, elucidating the importance of *mudrā*s.

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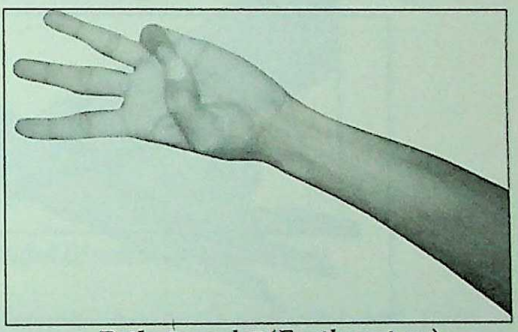
Although there are numerous *mudrās*, still, we shall focus on the *mudrās*, that are most necessary for spititual practices, in two parts: (a) Ordinary *mudrās*, and (b) Yogic *mudrās*. After that, we shall focus on the third part of this chapter — *bandhas*.

ORDINARY MUDRĀS (GESTURES)

Our body is composed of five elements namely — earth, water, fire, air and ether. These elements can be controlled through the fingers and thumb of the hands and with the help of *svara* (subtle form of breath). As we discuss *mudrās*, it is necessary to know which finger represents which element. Thumb — fire element, forefinger — air, middle finger — ether, ring finger — water and little finger — earth.

PṚTHVĪ-MUDRĀ (EARTH GESTURE)

Bend the little finger and touch its tip to the tip of the thumb forming a circle of the two. This is *pṛthvī-mudrā*. Keep the other fingers straight.



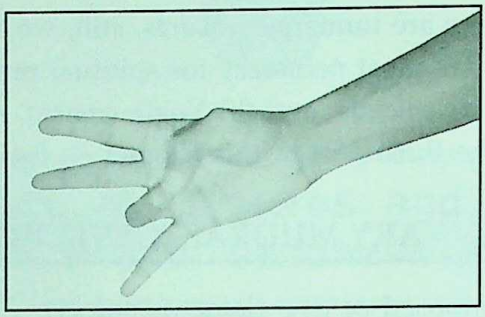
Pṛthvī-mudrā (Earth gesture)

Benefits It is more beneficial, if practised with both hands. It remedies deficiency of vitamins and the earth element in the body. It also banishes leanness.

JALA-MUDRĀ (WATER GESTURE)

Bend the ring finger and touch its tip to the tip of the thumb. This is *jala-mudrā*. Keep the other fingers straight.

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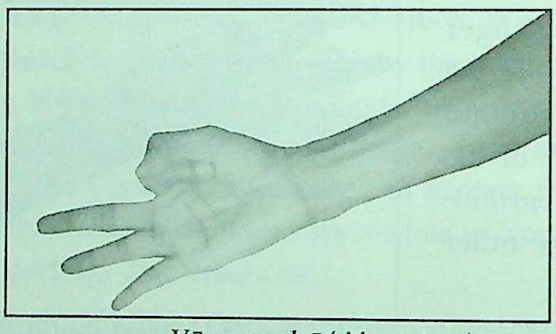


Jala-mudrā (*Water gesture*)

Benefits It remedies urinary disorders and increases thirst. It also banishes deficiency of water element in the body.

VĀYU-MUDRĀ (AIR GESTURE)

Bend the forefinger and touch its tip to the base of the thumb pressing a bit. This is *vāyu-mudrā*. Keep the other fingers straight.



Vāyu-mudrā (*Air gesture*)

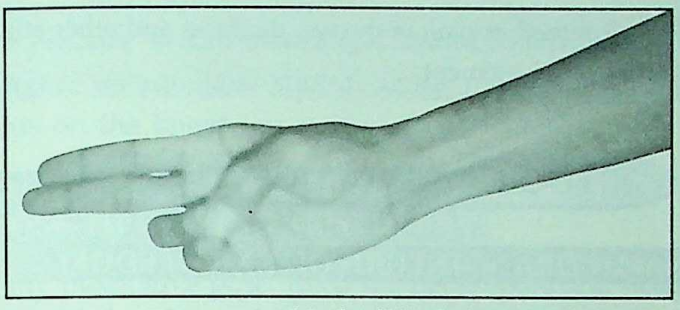
Benefits It remedies wind problems like rheumatism, shivering, too much, belching, hiccups and vomiting.

PRĀṆAVĀYU-MUDRĀ (VITAL AIR GESTURE)

Bend the ring and little fingers and touch their tips to the tip of the thumb. This is *prāṇavāyu-mudrā*.

Benefits It remedies deficiency of *prāṇic* energy and eye problems.

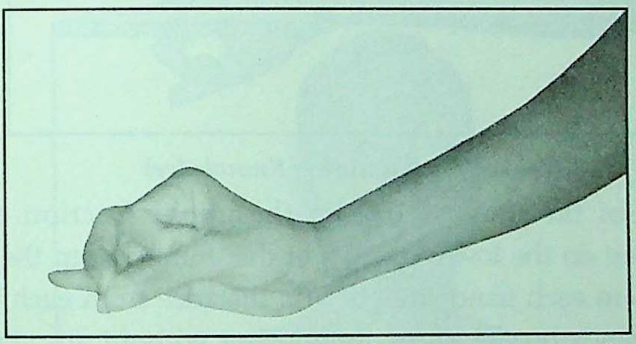
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Prāṇavāyu-Mudrā (*Vital air gesture*)

APĀNAVĀYU-MUDRĀ (EXCRETORY-AIR GESTURE)

Bend the fore finger and touch its tip to the base of the thumb. Next, touch the tips of the ring and middle fingers to the tip of the thumb. This is *apānavāyu-mudrā*.

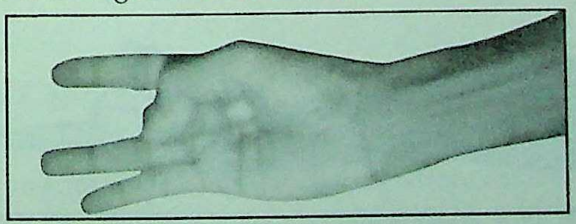


Apānavāyu-Mudrā (*Excretory-air gesture*)

Benefits It remedies ailments like heart problems and piles.

ŚŪNYA-MUDRĀ (SYPHON GESTURE)

Bend the middle finger and touch its tip to the base of the thumb. Then press the finger with the thumb.



Śūnya-mudrā (*Syphon gesture*)

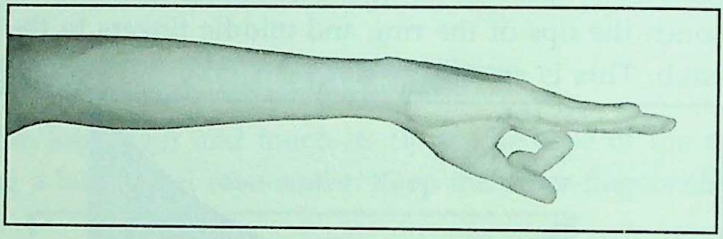
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Benefits It remedies pain in the ear, deafness and other ailments related to the ether element.

YOGIC MUDRĀS (GESTURE)

JÑĀNA-MUDRĀ (GESTURE OF KNOWLEDGE)

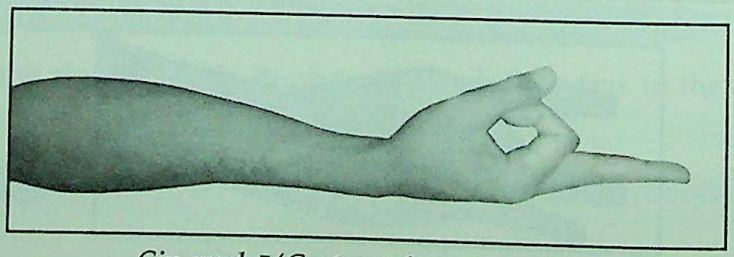
It is a posture that denotes the union of the soul and the Supreme, after the soul has overcome the limitations of the world. Sit in any meditative pose. Then, place the tips of forefingers of both hands



Jñāna-mudrā (*Gesture of Knowledge*)

at the base of the thumbs and let the upper fraction of the forefingers rest on the lower fraction of the thumb. Keep the other three fingers in each hand straight at a distance from each other. Place both hands on the knees straight but without any tension. The palms should face the floor.

Benefits This *mudrā* reverses the flow of energy in the psychic channels. One becomes capable of remaining still in one position for a long time. Hence, this *mudrā* is beneficial for entering into meditation and for making the disturbed mind peaceful.



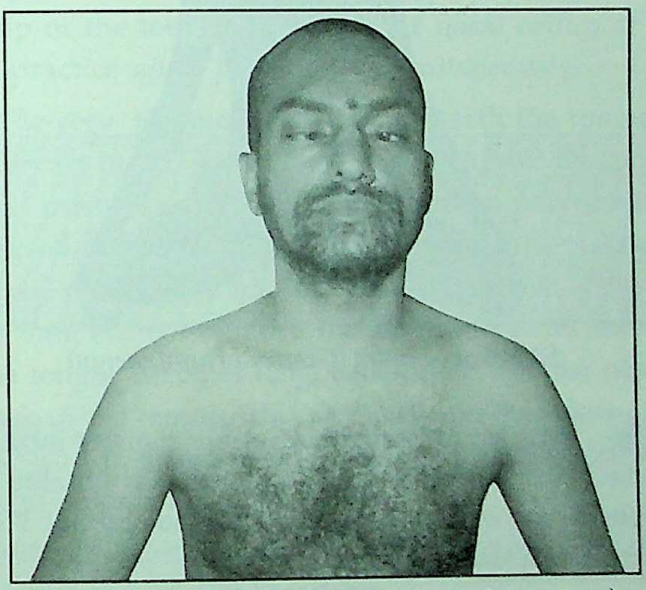
Cin-mudrā (*Gesture of consciousness*)

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Further practice — Cin-mudrā (gesture of consciousness) — Keep the fingers as in *jñāna-mudrā*. Only place the palms facing upwards on the knees.

NĀSIKĀGRA DṚṢṬI-MUDRĀ (NOSE-TIP GAZING GESTURE)

Sit in any meditative pose. Keep the neck, spine and head straight. Fix the eyes on the tip of the nose. Keep the gaze fixed only till you feel comfortable and there is no tension in the eyes. Start with one minute and slowly increase the duration to as much as you can. For longer durations one can breathe normally. Otherwise hold the breath in.



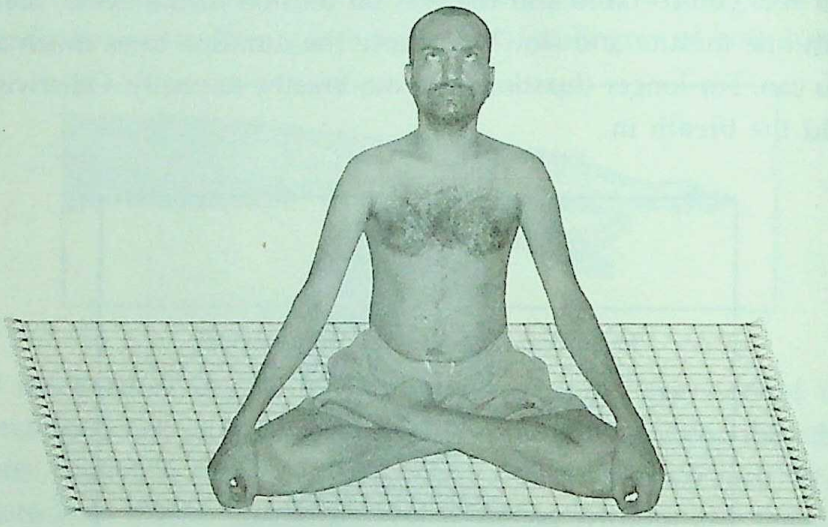
Nāsikāgra dṛṣṭi-mudrā (Nose-tip gazing gesture)

Benefits It is beneficial in activation of the *mūlādhāra cakra*. It is a very good means for turning one's senses inwards, for spiritual progress and for increasing the concentration. Further *mudrās* that can follow this are *kākī-mudrā, māṇḍūkī-mudrā* and *bhūcarī-mudrā*.

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ŚĀMBHAVĪ-MUDRĀ (GESTURE OF HOLY ENERGY)

Sit in a meditative pose. Keep the back straight. Place the hands on the knees in *jñāna* or *cin-mudrā*. Concentrate your eyes on some point in front of you. Slowly try to look higher raising the eyesight upwards. Keep the head still. Only raise the gaze. At the end concentrate the gaze on the third eye, the eyebrow centre. Try to still the thoughts and enter into meditation. Try to remain for a long duration in the final position.



Śāmbhavī-mudrā (*Gesture of holy energy*)

Benefits This activates the third eye or the *ājñā cakra*. It links one to the higher consciousness. It keeps the eyes healthy. It frees one of tension and worries and makes the mind peaceful. For further practice perform *ākāśī-mudrā*.

AŚVINĪ-MUDRĀ (GESTURE OF CELESTIALS)

Sit in a meditative pose and close the eyes. Keep the body relaxed and place the hands on the knees in *jñāna* or *cin-mudrā*. Constrict and relax the sphincter muscles, for some moments. Practise as much as you can. When you have perfected it, then, make a

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change. Breathe in, when constricting the muscles. Keeping them constricted, hold the breath. Then, breathe out and relax the muscles. Repeat as much as you can, comfortably.

Benefits This gesture stops the *prāṇic* energy from getting depleted, i.e., it conserves *prāṇic* energy. It is beneficial in piles, prolapsus of anus and of the womb. It also remedies indigestion.

KHECARĪ-MUDRĀ (TONGUE LOCK GESTURE)

This *mudrā* is performed in different ways in *rāja-yoga* and *haṭha-yoga*. According to *rāja-yoga* texts, the mouth should be closed and the tip of the tongue be touched to the upper palate. Without exerting, push the tongue up into the mouth as much as you can. Let the tip of the tongue penetrate the nasal orifice at the top. One can practice *ujjayī prāṇāyāma*, simultaneously.

In *haṭha-yoga*, the membrane, underneath the tongue, is cut every week, bit by bit. For this, one needs to have the guidance of an expert master, i.e., *guru*. For the cutting, one needs banana plant's thread and sharp stone, etc. The tongue is massaged with butter, ghee, oil and/or milk to make it long. This is done till the tongue is long enough to touch the forehead in near the eyebrow. When the tongue becomes long, penetrate it into the nasal orifice at the back of the mouth. This shall activate the *lalanā cakra*. This shall also lead to eruption of elixir, i.e., *amṛta*, which helps the Aspirant to enter into *samādhi*.

Keep the breathing normal in the beginning but, after some practice, slow the pace of breathing.

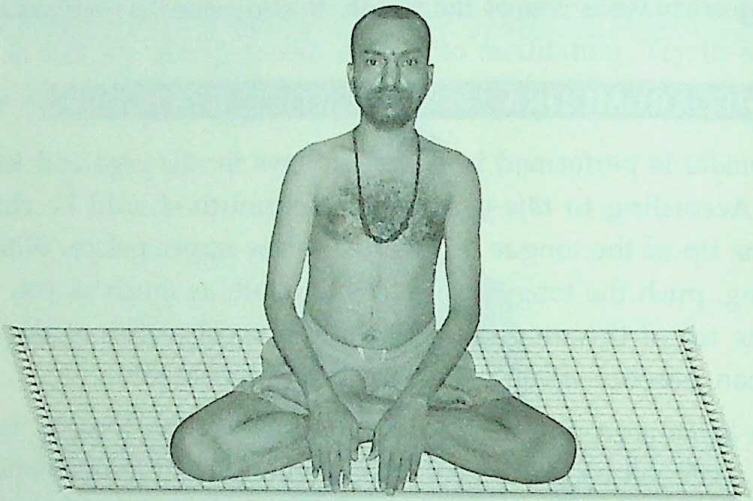
Benefits This gesture has a subtle effect on the whole body. It helps one attain control over hunger and thirst. It conserves the *prāṇic* energy and helps in the activation of the *kuṇḍalinī*. After mastering this gesture, one gains control over the link between the gross and the subtle bodies. The ancient Yoga texts, explain this gesture, in detail.

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PRĀṆA-MUDRĀ (LIFE ENERGY GESTURE)

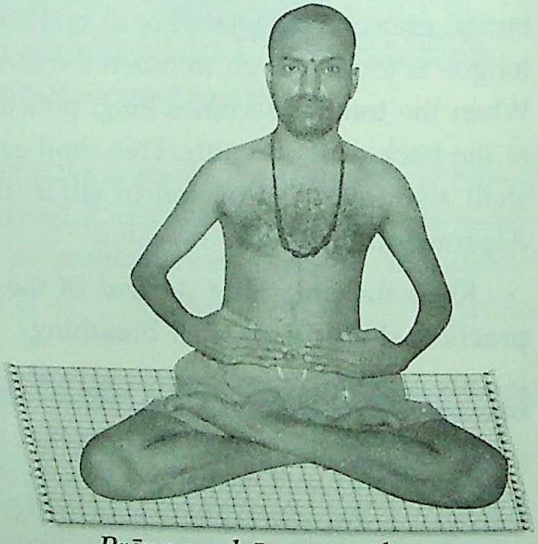
Sit in a meditative pose. Keep the spine, neck and head straight.

(a) Place the palms on the floor before yourself. The hands must be close together with the tips of thumbs not touching, each other. The eyes could be closed or open. After this —



Prāṇa-mudrā (*Life energy gesture*) *first Pose*

Breathe out totally. Then, holding the breath out, perform *mūla bandha*. Concentrate on the *mūlādhāra* centre.



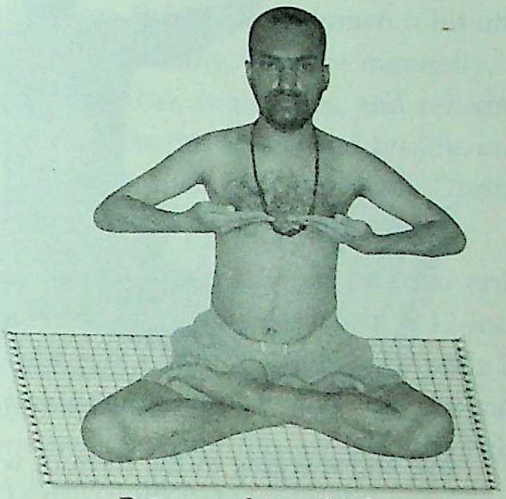
Prāṇa-mudrā — second pose

(b) Relax the *mūla bandha*, and expanding the abdomen, breathe in deeply and slowly. Raise the hands and bring them before the navel region. The palms should face towards the body. The fingers of both palms

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must face each other, at some distance. Doing this, visualize the *prāṇic* energy rising from the *mūlādhāra* to the *maṇipūra cakra*.

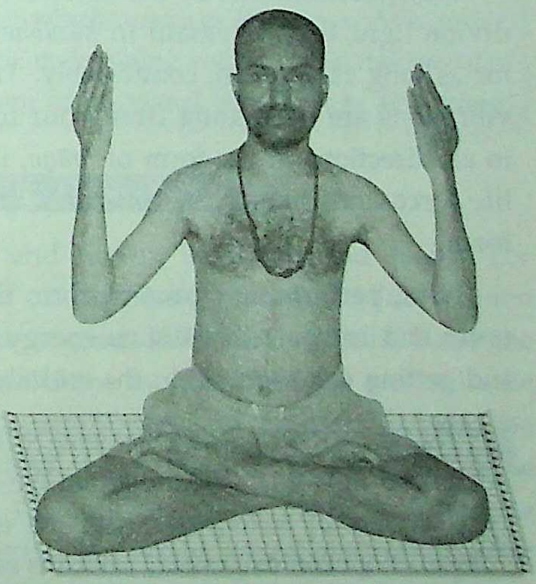
(c) Expand the chest and keep breathing in. Raise the hands up and bring them to the level of the chest. The palms and the fingers must be positioned, as before but turn them upwards. Now, visualize the *prāṇic* energy rising from the *maṇipūra cakra* to the *anāhata cakra*.



Prāṇa-mudrā — third pose

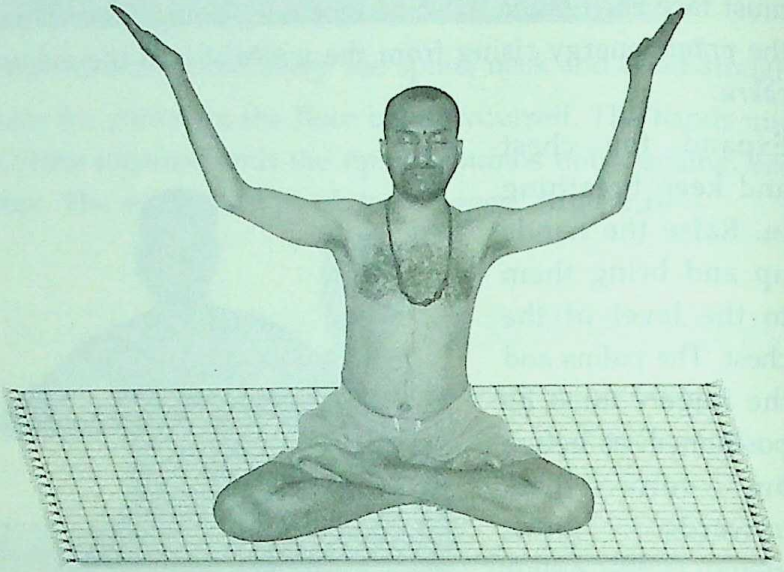
(d) With the elbows pointing to the floor, the palms facing you, raise the palms a little above the shoulders. Try to breathe in as much air as you can. Visualize the *prāṇic* energy rising from the *anāhata cakra* to the *viśuddhi cakra*.

(e) Open the hands on either side of the upper torso and closing the eyes visualize the *prāṇic* energy rising to the *ājñā cakra* or the third



Prāṇa-mudrā — fourth pose

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Prāṇa-mudrā — fifth pose

eye and merging in the form of waves into the *sahasrāra*. The open palms must be at the level of the ears or even high above head and one must continue holding the breath-in.

Now, concentrate on the *sahasrāra* and visualize a source of divine light there. Remain in *kumbhaka* (holding the breath in) for as long as you can, comfortably. Try to imagine that peaceful vibrations are emanating from your form and are spreading out in all directions in the form of *prāṇa*, i.e., vital energy waves, the life force and divine consciousness are getting merged into one form.

Next, performing *recaka*, perform the five steps in the reverse order and imagine that divine energy is entering into your form and getting concentrated in the *mūlādhāra* and all other *cakra*s too.

Benefits The benefits, accruing from this practice, cannot be described in words. One rises from the state of individual isolation to the state of feeling one with the entire universe. There rises universal love in one's heart, which is necessary for getting into the experience of the essence of the Vedas.

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VAJROLI-MUDRĀ (LIGHTING GESTURE)

Sit in any meditative pose and place the hands on the knees. Close the eyes and breathe in, deeply and slowly, allowing the body to relax. Imagine that you are trying to curb the urge to urinate and, for this, holding the breath, press the lower abdomen a bit and contract the sex-organ inwards, mentally, but not manually. If necessary, perform *mūla bandha*. After contracting and relaxing the sex-organ four to five times, relax the *bandha* and breathe out, slowly. Rest for a few minutes and, then, practice again. During the entire practice, concentrate on the *svādhiṣṭhāna cakra*.

The next higher stage of this practice should be tried only under the guidance of an expert *guru* (master). In it, a 12-inch long tube of rubber or silver is used. With the tube, one pulls in water, milk, *ghī* (purified liquid butter), honey and mercury into the urinary tract. When one has mastered this art with the help of a tube one should try without a tube.

Benefits Through this practice the semen is made to rise along the *vajra* channel and it is converted into *vajra*, i.e., the undestructible superior form of energy by which one rises above sex. As a result, one gains the capability of maintaining celibacy and the *kuṇḍalinī* gets activated. The problem of nocturnal emissions is also cured.

YONI-MUDRĀ (CAUSAL GESTURE)

Sit in a comfortable pose and breathe in, slowly and deeply. For this practice, *padmāsana* or *siddhāsana* are best. For women aspirants, *siddha yoni āsana* is good. Hold the breath in. Raise the hands and bring them close to the mouth. Close the ears with the thumbs, the eyes with the forefingers and the nostrils with the middle fingers. Place the tips of the ring and little fingers on the lips and close the mouth. Concentrate on the *bindu cakra* and try to concentrate on the internal resonance, called *antar-nāda*. After performing *kumbhaka*, according to your ability, remove the fingers

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from the nostrils and slowly breathe out. Rest for a few moments and, then, repeat.

Benefits This is a very powerful practice for *pratyāhāra*. It activates the *bindu cakra* and the subtle sounds, produced from it, become obvious to the aspirant. Through concentration on this sound, i.e., *nāda* one attains true joy and starts to enjoy the inward journey.

NAVAMUKHĪ-MUDRĀ (NINE DOOR GESTURE)

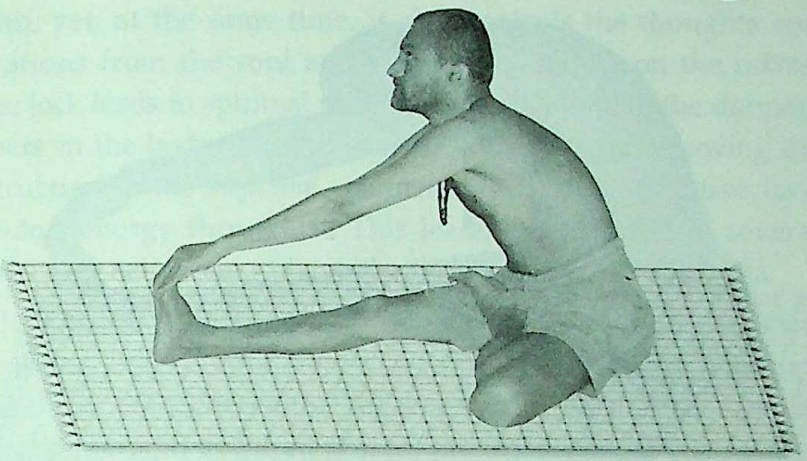
Sit in any meditative pose and relax the body breathing in, deeply and slowly. As you breathe in, imagine the consciousness is rising from the *mūlādhāra* to the *sahasrāra*. Hold the breath in. As described in *yonī-mudrā*, close the mouth, ears, nostrils and eyes. Practice *mūla bandha* and *vajroli-mudrā*. Concentrate on the *sahasrāra cakra*. After holding the breath in, according to your capacity, open the nostrils and relax the *mūla bandha* and *vajroli-mudrā* and breathe out slowly. Rest, for some time and, then, repeat. Repeat as much as you can, comfortably and, without any strain. When breathing out, imagine that the consciousness is returning to the *mūlādhāra* or spreading all over the body.

Benefits This *mudrā* is helpful in activation of the tenth *cakra* through the process of activation of the six *cakras*. The tenth *cakra* is called *brahmrandhra, brahmadvāra* or the door to higher consciousness. Also, all the benefits of *yonī-mudrā* accrue with better force. The other nine *cakras* are *mūlādhāra, Svadhiṣṭhāna, Maṇipūra, Anāhata, Viśuddhi, Ājñā, Lalana, Bindu-visarga* and *Sahsrāra*.

MAHĀ-MUDRĀ (GREAT GESTURE)

Sit with the legs spread out straight before yourself. Bend the right leg in a way that the right heel is positioned under the anus. Bend forward and with fingers of both hands catch hold of the big toe of the left foot. Let the entire body relax. Breathe in deeply.

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Mahā-mudrā (Great gesture)

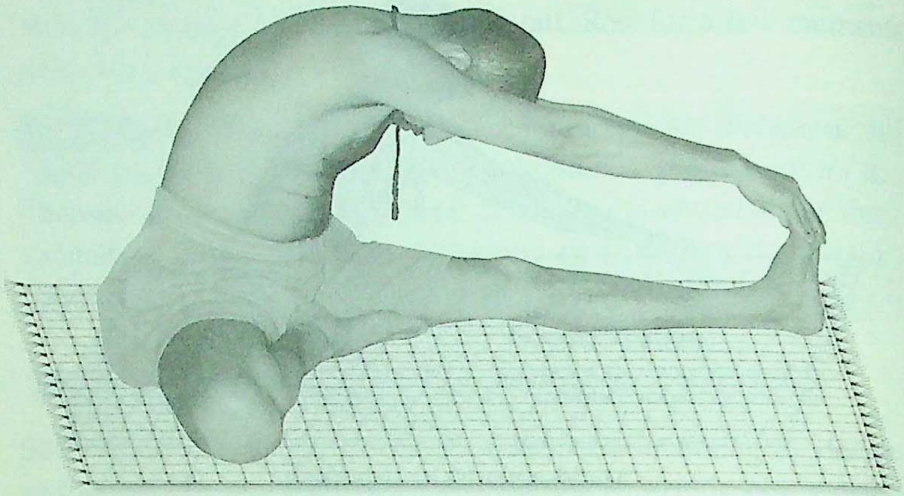
Bend the head, backwards, a bit and holding the breath in, perform *mūla bandha* and *śāmbhavi-mudrā*. Concentrate on the *mūlādhāra, viśuddhi* and *ājñā cakra*s alternatively in sequence. Concentrate on each *cakra* for one or two seconds and, then, move on. Keep moving from one *cakra* to the other. After holding the breath in for as long as you can, comfortably, then, straighten the head, relax the *mūla bandha* and *śāmbhavī-mudrā* and breathe out, slowly. Repeat the entire practice as many times as you can. Repeat with the other leg bent. Do not stress while trying this practice.

Benefits This practice makes the body and the mind get prepared for meditation and makes the flow of *prāṇa* in the body smooth. It removes stomach disorders.

MAHĀBHEDA-MUDRĀ (GREAT GOAL ATTAINER GESTURE)

Sit in the posture of *mahā-mudrā*. Breathe in, deeply and, then, breathe out, completely. Then, holding the breath out, bend the head forward. Concentrate the eyes on the tip of the nose. Perform *uḍḍīyāna, mūla* and *jālandhara bandha*s. Concentrate, alternatively in sequence, on the *mūlādhāra, maṇipūra* and *viśuddhi cakra*s. Concentrate on each *cakra* for one or two seconds and, then, move

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Mahābheda-mudrā (*Great goal attainer gesture*)

on. Keep moving from one *cakra* to the other. After holding the breath out for as long as you can, comfortably, then relax the three *bandhas*. Then, breathe in deeply and repeat.

Bheda means to pierce. Hence —

bhidyate hṛdaya granthiścidyante sarva sanśayāḥ ।
kśīyante cāsya karmāṇi tasmin dṛṣṭe parāvare ॥

This verse from the Upaniṣads tells about the experience that can be had through this *mudrā*. When one experiences the absolute bliss, all the bondage gets released, all doubts get cleared and all actions (responsible for rebirths) are destroyed. That is Liberation.

BANDHA (LOCKS)

This is a very very powerful and important practice of Yoga. It is very helpful in gaining perfect control over all the parts of the body and nerves. *Bandha* (lock) means to tie up or to make something stiff or to keep under control. It massages the internal organs. Although it is a physical practice that makes the functioning of body balanced and helps in attaining to better

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health, yet, at the same time, it also controls the thoughts and vibrations from the soul and has a subtle effect on the *cakra*s. Thus, lock leads to spiritual progress and activation of the dormant powers in the body. In other words, Lock helps in removing the obstruction in the *suṣumnā* channel and in promoting free flow of *prāṇic* energy through it. This leads to activation of several glands and helps one to have the highest experience of Yoga.

It is for this final accomplishment of liberation that *āsana*s, *prāṇāyāma*, *mudrā*s and *bandha*s are practised. Hence, through perfect harmony between the Yogic processes, the spiritual energies are activated and spiritual powers are attained and one reaches one's final goal.

BANDHAS LOCKS
JĀLANDHARA BANDHA (WATER GATE LOCK OR CIN LOCK)

Sit in *padmāsana* or *siddhāsana* or perform this practice while standing. Place the hands on the knees. Relax the entire body and close the eyes. Breathe in, deeply and, then, hold the breath in. Bend the head forward and press the chin into the chest. Straighten the hands and pressing the knees sit still or be standing still. Position the shoulders a bit forward with both of them raised a bit. Keep the entire body, stiff and still. This is the position of *jālandhara bandha*. Hold the breath in, i.e., internal retention and try to remain in this position for as long as you can, comfortably. Then, relax the shoulders and hands and raise the



Jālandhara bandha
(Water gate lock or cin lock)

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head. Breathe out, slowly. Rest, for some time and, then, repeat.

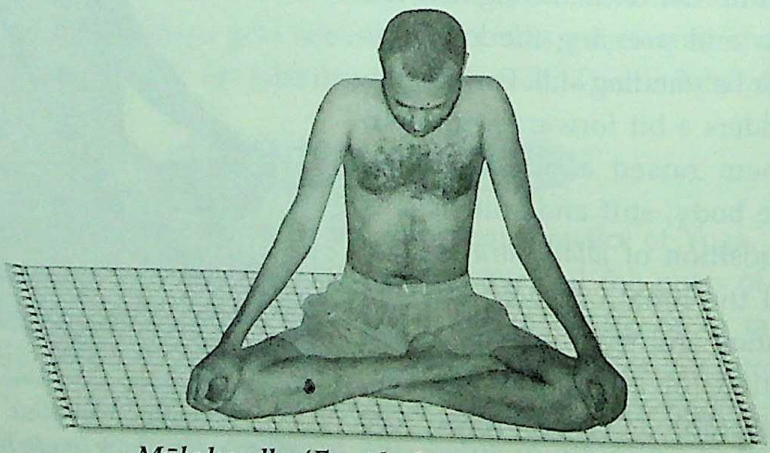
One can also perform the Bandha in another way. Breathe in deeply, then, without holding in the breath, breathe out, completely. Then, perform the *bandha* holding the breath out, i.e., external retention. Concentrate on the *viśuddhi cakra*.

Precautions — Those suffering from high blood pressure, heart problems, mental stress and migraine should practice under the guidance of a Yoga expert.

Benefits This practice affects the nerves of the neck, the arteries that carry blood to the head, the thyroid and parathyroid glands, etc. Thus, the shape and development of the body and the sexual performance get regulated. It also helps in riddance from mental tension, worries, anger and mental disorders. It also helps control disorders related to high and low blood pressure.

MŪLA BANDHA (ROOT LOCK OR THE ANAL LOCK)

Sit in any meditative pose with the knees touching the floor. For this, *siddhāsana* is best. In this lock, the *mūlādhāra* region is contracted. Thus, *mūla bandha*, i.e., the anal lock is performed, automatically. Close the eyes and place the palms on the knees. Relax the entire body. Breathe in deeply and hold the breath in,



***Mūla bandha* (Root lock or the anal lock)**

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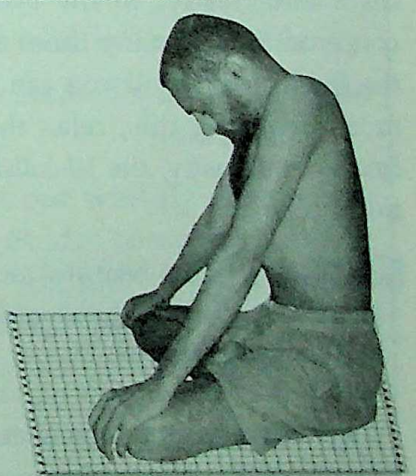
i.e., internal tension. Then, perform *jālandhara bandha*. Contract and relax the sphincter muscles and try to pull them, inwards. This is the final position. Try to hold the breath in for as long as you can and keep contracting and relaxing the sphincter muscles. Finally, relax the muscles and relax the Lock. Then, slowly breathe out. Concentrate on the *mūlādhāra cakra*.

One can also do this practice after exhaling, completely and holding the breath out, i.e., external retention. Those who wish to remain in the final position for a long time can do so by breathing, normally.

Benefits In this practice, the *apāna vāyu* mixes with *prāṇa vāyu*, i.e., the excretory air merges into the life force called as vital air and this results in generation of a great amount of energy that helps in activation of *kuṇḍalinī* more easily. This practice is helpful in maintenance of celibacy and activation of divine energy within. It is also very beneficial for those suffering from piles, indigestion and other stomach ailments. It tones up and strengthens the sphincter muscles, the nerves of the waist region and the intestines. It prepares the mind for spiritual practices.

UḌḌĪYĀNA BANDHA (ABDOMINAL LOCK)

Sit in a meditative pose in which the knees touch the floor. *Padmāsana* and *siddhāsana* are best. Place the palms on the knees. Breathe out, completely and holding the breath out, i.e., external retention perform *jālandhara bandha*. Now, pull the stomach inwards and upwards as much as you can, i.e., total contraction of abdomen. Remain in the final position comfortably



Uḍḍīyāna bandha (Abdominal lock)

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as long as you can. Next relax the stomach and the *bandha* and breathe in. Rest for some moments and then repeat. Concentrate on the *maṇipūra cakra*.

Precautions — One should try this lock on an empty stomach. Pregnant women and those suffering from heart problems, stomach ulcers, etc., should not practice it.

Benefits It is beneficial in ailments of the stomach. It makes the worried and troubled mind, peaceful and still. It activates the sensory and motor nerves. It massages all the organs, specially those in the stomach region. It helps in the proper functioning of the *maṇipūra cakra*, which is the centre of *prāṇic* — the vital energy in the body. It encourages the *prāṇic* energy to flow upwards through the *suṣumnā* channel.

MAHĀ BANDHA (GREAT LOCK)

It is the combination of three locks mentioned above. Breathe out, completely and, then, perform *jālandhara*, *uḍḍīyāna* and *mūla bandhas* in this sequence. Never change the sequence that means never practice first *uḍḍīyāna* or *mūla bandhas*. After this, move your concentration on to the *mūlādhāra cakra*, then, the *maṇipūra cakra* and, lastly, to the *viśuddhi cakra*. Repeat this cycle of concentration as many times as you can, comfortably. Remain in the final position till you can hold the breath without any stress or strain. After this, relax the *mūla bandha*, then, the *uḍḍīyāna bandha* and, lastly, the *jālandhara bandha*. Rest for some time and, then, repeat.

Benefits The benefits, mentioned in the above three *bandhas* are accrued. The most important benefit is that it puts you towards the door of liberation.

For more details of *mudrās* and *bandhas*, one can study *Haṭha-Yoga-Pradīpika*, chapter 3 verses 1 to 103.

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Part-2

Purification of Mind (Cittaśuddhi Vijñāna)

For the fulfilment of the final goal of Yoga, i.e., fusion of the soul with the Supreme, only physical purification and activation of the *kuṇḍalinī* are not enough. For this, purification of the mind is most important. Until some spiritual parctices are not accomplished for the dilution of the passions, the Yogic processes would only serve to bestow *ṛddhi*s (worldly accomplishments) and *siddhi*s (divine powers) upon an aspirant, i.e., *sādhaka* and compel him to again get entangled in the world of *māyā* (delusion). This part is dedicated to the dilution of passions. This process is called *bīja-nāśa* (destruction of the seed of passion, leading to destruction of the seed of rebirth).

The great *yogī*, Patañjali, has said in *Kaivalyapāda*:

tacchidreṣu pratyayāntarāṇī saṁskārebhyaḥ hānameṣāṁ kleśavadduḥkhaṁ । — 4/27-28

Due to the imprints left over of our worldly experiences since many births, hindrances do come up during spiritual practices. But one should destroy them, similarly, as you destroy the afflictions.

In other words, liberation from the world of *māyā* (delusion) is not possible without destroying ignorance and the seed of passion. For this, purification of the mind

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is important. First of all, the fickle tendency of the mind is curbed through *niṣkāma karma yoga* and *āhāra śuddhi*. Then, the mind is controlled through practices like *trāṭaka* and, then, through meditation and maintainance of inner silence, the senses are directed towards the Supreme. If in such a state, one tries meditation, then, sure enough, one attains the state of *samādhi*, i.e., spiritual liberation. This part has been divided into seven chapters, all dedicated to the purification of the mind. These chapters, are 6. Science of Desireless/Fruitless actions (Niṣkāma Karma Vijñāna); 7. Science of Balanced diet (Yuktāhāra Vijñāna); 8. Science of Yogic Sleep (Yoga Nidrā Vijñāna); 9. Science of Introversion (Pratyāhāra Vijñāna); 10. Science of Concentration (Trāṭaka Vijñāna); 11. Science of Fixation (Dhāraṇā Vijñāna); and 12. Science of Meditation (Dhyāna Vijñāna). [Note: the serial number is in series from the beginning of this book.]

Among these, the chapters, 6 to 8, are for preparation for *pratyāhāra*. The tenth chapter is the link between *pratyāhāra* and *dhāraṇā*. The last two chapters relate to *dhāraṇā* and *dhyanā*.

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Science of Desireless Actions (Niṣkāma Karma Yoga Vijñāna)

In the long journey of purification of the mind, the first step is *niṣkāma karma yoga* Yogic science of desireless action. Generally, people take care of only their outer appearance by keeping it clean, beautiful and appealing. They even adopt all means to keep their voice, sweet and pleasant. But when it comes to purification of the mind, they fail miserably. There are two reasons for this — firstly, they do not realize its significance and, secondly, they nurture wishes and desires that are against *dharma* (righteousness), i.e., spiritual discipline.

One should try to understand its significance, as detailed in the *Gītā* and also try to understand the process of *karma-tyāga* or giving up action. All creatures in the world are always engaged in some task. No one can survive even one moment without carrying out some action or the other, be it physical, mental or verbal.

na hi kaścit-kṣaṇamapi jātu tiṣṭhatyakarmakṛt । — 3/5

No one can exist even a moment without doing any action of any type — gross or subtle.

Hence, it is impossible to avoid action or *karma*. The alternative is to keep thinking as to how and which type of *karma* or action would lead to rebirth, and, how one could move and which type of action would take towards freedom from *karmas*.

yuktaḥ karmaphalaṁ tyaktvā śāntimāpnoti naiṣṭhikīṁ ।
ayuktaḥ kāmakāreṇa phalai sakto nibadhyate ॥ — 5/12

A discriminative person, who has control over his senses,

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will shed down the fruits of action and attain peace. While a non-discriminative person, who has no control over his senses and desires, does all actions to gain worldly pleasures and is trapped in misery.

It is clear from this statement of the *Gītā* that *sakāma karma* (action done with ego and desires) is the cause of bondage and *niṣkāma karma* (egoless and desireless action) leads to liberation. This is why Lord Kṛṣṇa said —

karmaṇyevādhikāraste mā phaleṣu kādācana । — 2/47

A person has a right to perform actions as a duty but never on the fruits (results) of the action. That means, we have right to do but no right over attaining the result of it; as to when, how, how much, what and where we will be gaining.

In order to make one's action egoless, one should first understand how *karma* gets accumulated so that one could get to the root and cleanse it. Here, are a few tips —

sadṛśam ceṣṭate svasyā prakṛtir-jñānavānapi,
prakṛtiṁ yānti bhūtāni nigraḥ kim kariṣyati । — 3/33

Even the elites perform actions, according to their fate. So, how can you abstain any human being or creature from performing actions according to their fate.

prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ ।— *3/27*

It is the nature (ignorance) that is doing all actions through its own attributes all over.

kāryate hyavaśaḥ karma sarvāḥ prakṛtijair-guṇaiḥ ।
indriyaṇīndri yārtheṣu vartante iti dhārayan ॥ — *5/3*

Due to one's own natural attributes that has sprouted from one's own ignorance everybody, unwillingly, also do many actions. For they think that the sense-organs are tempted

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to move into the world and get entangled.

According to these verses, the three reasons for accumulation of *karmas* are as follows:

1. The basic nature of the aspirant, which is due to his ignorance.
2. The *māyā* i.e. *prakṛti* or delusion of this world.
3. The tendency of the senses to be attracted towards pleasures.

For the destroying of these reasons, Lord Kṛṣṇa, first of all, directs the aspirant to bring about a change in one's nature.

sukha duḥkhe same kṛtvā lābhā lābhau jayā jayau ।
tato yuddhāya yujyasva naivam pāpamavāpsyasi ॥
— 2/38

An aspirant who practises all actions without being affected by its results like — happiness and sorrow, profit and loss, victory and failure, etc. (that means has same attitude towards all opposites), then, surely such an aspirant, as a duty, if needed, wages war, even then, he will not get afflicted by sins or virtues.

and

rāgadveṣa viyuktaistu viṣayānīndriyaiścaran । **— 2/64**

By giving up love and hatred towards worldly pleasures even though an aspirant, due to fate, experiences, through sense-organs, worldly things, still, he will never get afflicted by them.

One should practise to do action without being affected by happiness-sorrow, gain-loss, success-failure. This is possible only when one does actions considering them as one's duty without any love or hate. In this relation, the Lord says —

saha yajñāḥ prajāḥ sṛṣṭvā purovāca prajāpatiḥ ।
anena prasaviṣyadhvameṣa voastviṣṭakāmadhuk ॥
— 3/10

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The creator of the world has created you, human beings, with certain eternal-religious obligations, which he himself had stated in the beginning of the universe. All those who follow those obligations will attain all their desires. So, just follow them as stated in the Vedas.

This is the *sanātana dharma* (eternal religion) prescribed by the Vedas. It was by following these principles that great souls like, Janaka, reached the ultimate goal of human life.

karmaṇaiva hi sansiddhi māsthitā janakādayaḥ ।

— 3/20

Through selfless and desireless actions only, king Janaka and others attained salvation.

The second thing to remember is, that, when it is the Lord himself who does everything through his powers of *māyā*, then, it is better to discard the thought that it is "I, who, am doing something" rather than stick to whatever is going on, according to his wish, and do all that is necessary at that juncture as per your duty. This is why it is said —

ahaṅkāra vimūḍhātmā kartā hamiti manyate ।

— 3/27

A person, overcome by ego due to ignorance, thinks that "I am the doer and the enjoyer."

This is the biggest blunder that has been done by us. This is what we have to give up and not the actions themselves.

The third thing, to keep in mind, is to give up desires. In this regard, it is said —

jahi śatrum mahābāho kāmarūpam durāsadam ।

— 3/43

Give up all desires, for these are the greatest and strongest enemies of a spiritual aspirant.

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and

trividham narakasyedam dvāram nāśana mātmanaḥ ।
kāmaḥ krodhastathā lobhas tasmādetattrayam tyajet ॥
— 16/22

The doors to hell and one's own destruction are these three only — desires, anger and lust. Therefore, renounce these three. That means beaware of these three.

kāmyānām karmaṇām nyāsam saṁnyāsam kavayo viduḥ ।
— 18/2

The great scholars say that the real meaning of *saṁnyāsa* is wilfully renouncing the fruits of actions, i.e., to give up *sakāma karma*s. That means renunciation of the fruits of actions and not giving up *naimittika* (temporal) and *nitya* (obligatory) actions but do them too as a duty.

And, lastly, one should distract the mind from bad *karma*s.

It is seen in the world that, for the fulfilment of one's wishes, a person goes against the principles of *dharma* (righteousness), indulges in lustful action, corruption and evil deeds. He becomes violent due to his anger, he starts discriminating due to his infatuation and steals because of his greed. If a person adopts the following principles, this would not happen. These principles are (1) Act considering action as one's duty, (2) Act without ego and ego-centric desires, (3) Act without the thought that – I am doing this and also without the thought that – I will enjoy the fruits (results) of this, (4) Give up bad company and all evil deeds, prohibited by the Vedas, (5) Try to please the Lord with full devotion in Him, (6) Act for the good of the society, (7) Try to earn disseminate knowledge.

Hence, *niṣkāma karma yoga* which means, acting without ego and infatuation, is the first step on the path of spiritualism.

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Science of Balanced Diet (Yuktāhāra Vijñāna)

THE worldly people, specially, those of the present age, are often heard of saying, that, especially in the modern times, when corruption rules the roost in the material world, *niṣkāma karma yoga* i.e., to lead a life of desireless action is impossible. But this is just an excuse. By following the tenets of *sanātana dharma* (the eternal religion), as prescribed by the Vedas, one could attain success in life and also peace and happiness. If someone still argues that, in the present, modern and scientific age, one has to do everything in order to get all luxuries and modern means of comforts and that one cannot possibly remain without these, then, let us counter this argument, too.

First of all, let us know whether the mind is your master or you are the master of the mind. If mind is the master, then, you shall have to do as it tells you in order to keep it appeased. But this is not the Truth, because you are the master of your mind. For, you see and experience your mind and say — "Today I am in a pleasant mood," etc. Therefore, becoming the slave of mind is not the right way of life. Through certain means, you can control the mind perfectly. These means are — *santoṣa, abhyāsa vairāgya, maitryādi* and *yuktāhāra*.

SANTOṢA

jehi vidhi rākhe rām tehi vidhi rahiye ।

i.e., one should live in contentment in the state which the

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Lord has prescribed for us as per our own actions, performed in previous births.

yadṛccha lābhena santuṣṭaḥ ।
— Gītā, 4/22

To be contented, with whatever we get according to our destiny, in spite of doing hard work, is the best way of Liberation, i.e., happiness.

santoṣādanuttama sukhalābhaḥ ।
— Yoga-Sūtra, 2/42

By contentment one can attain ceaseless infinite bliss.

ABHYĀSA VAIRAGYA

abhyāsa vairāgyābhyām tannirodhaḥ ।
— Yoga-Sūtra, 1/11

By regular practice and renunciation, one can control mind and its modifications.

abhyāsena ca kaunteya vairāgyeṇa ca gṛhyate ।
— Gītā, 6/35

By regular pracrtice and renunciation, you can hold your mind.

MAITRYĀDI

maitri-karuṇā-muditopekṣāṇām sukha-duḥkha-puṇyā puṇya-viṣayaḥ bhāvanātaścita prasādanam ॥
— Yoga-Sūtra, 1/33

There are four types of people and things, in this world. 1. Happy and luxurious; 2. Sorrowful; 3. Virtuous; and 4. Sinful. When an aspirant comes in contact with these he has to react with them respectively with: 1. Be friendly and not jealous; 2. Be kindful and not cruel; 3. Be pleased

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and not hateful; and 4. Be neglective and never harmful or be proud of oneself. This is how a *yogī* should lead his life and attain eternal peace through purification of mind in this world.

YUKTĀHĀRA

A diet that is wholly conducive to the practice of Yoga and spiritual progress is called yogic diet. Diet has intimate connection with the mind, because mind is formed from the subtlest portion or the essence of food.

One becomes purified of his inner nature by the purity of food and the purification of inner nature leads to memory of the Self. Food plays an important part in meditation. Therefore, the food should be light, nutritious and *sāttvika* i.e., supple. Diet is of three kind *sāttvika*, *rājasika* and *tāmasika*. Milk, barley, dates, fruits, vegetables, wheat, butter, honey, almonds, etc., are *sāttvika*; as they render purity and calmness to mind. Fish, eggs, meat, chillies, asafoetida, fried stuffs, spicy fast-foods etc., are *rājasika* as they create excitement and anger in mind. Beef, wine, garlic, onions, heavy foods and that which create lethargy, etc., are *tāmasika*; for they produce darkness, inertia, laziness and dullness.

You have to observe yourself, when you eat something and, watch the reaction whether, it helped you in your yogic practices or not? Instinct or inner voice within will guide you in the selection of foodstuff, according to your body constitution and temperament. It should be so much that your physical efficiency, good health and mental vigour are maintained. A knowledge of science of Dietics is essential for everyman. Myrobalans and milk are boons for *yogīs*, given by nature and cow. What is needed is a well-balanced and perfectly nutritions diet, not a rich-spicy-heavy diet. Never do drastic changes in diet. Eat to live.

Take food when the right nostril is running. Eat and drink

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like a master, never hurry up or make fuss about diet. One should never have any craving for any particular diet. That means never become a slave of food and drink. For details, look in *Haṭha-Yoga-Pradīpikā* chapter 1, verses 58 to 63.

apare niyatāhārāḥ ।
— *Gītā*, 4/30

Some aspirants practise a balanced diet of all sense-organs, not only food, to attain peace. So *niyatāhāra* or *yuktāhāra* i.e., balanced diet does not only mean to take pure good light food, but controlling all sense-organs from distractive things of the world and leading them towards spiritual things only. That means grasp only those things through your senses, which are helpful for your liberation.

The essence is — One should feel contented with what one has due to one's past actions and the grace of the Lord, and one should not struggle in vain to get more. *Abhyāsa*, i.e., continuous lifetime, totally devoted practice and *vairāgya*, i.e., renunciation mean to study and contemplate upon the scriptures and realize that one is better off than so many misery ridden humans.

One should not feel jealous of those who are more affluent, rather, one should feel friendly towards them. Also one should not despise the poor and the downtrodden, rather, one should have kindness and compassion for them in one's heart. One should not feel jealous of those who are more righteous and moral, rather, one should learn from them. One should not criticise or berate sinners, rather, one should ignore them. This is Patañjali's formula of balanced diet.

Yuktāhāra, balanced diet, is also very important for the purification of the mind. There is a famous saying — ***jaisā khāye anna vaisā bane mana***, i.e., the type of food one eats determines the type of mind one has. The best way of controlling the mind is controlling the desire for pleasures. It is said in *Mahābhārata* and *Bhāgavata* — ***jite rasam jitam sarvam***. which means one, who

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gains control over tongue and taste, wins the world, i.e., gets liberated.

In *Gītā*, it is said —

yuktāhāravihārasya yuktaceṣṭasya karmasu ।
yuktasvapnāvabodhasya yogo bhavati duḥkhahā ॥
— 6/17

i.e., one should control one's diet, sleep and waking, desires, actions, movements of body as well as mixing with people and practise Yoga in order to free oneself of sorrows.

Limited and balanced food of all sense-organs, limited movements, limited actions, limited sleep and waking, and similarly everything done within limits, helps Yoga to lead you towards permanent peace by destroying sorrows, completely.

Too much of anything is bad. One should not walk more than 6 km, sleep more than 6 hrs, not remain in the awakened state, working and using the senses for more than 8 to 10 hrs. In other words, one should sleep 6 hrs and work for 8 to 10 hrs, a total of 14 to 16 hrs. The rest of time one should devote in meditation, Yoga and spiritual *sādhanā*s (practices).

The verbal meaning of the word *yuktāhāra* is to have a balanced meal. But in Yoga the word *āhāra* is used, which does not just mean only food. But it means —

āhriyante śabdādi viṣayān iti āhāraḥ ।

i.e., experiencing all worldly or spiritual objects by all senses is called *āhāra*.

1. With the ears, one should listen to only discourses of the Lord, hymns, the scriptures and such useful things which provoke your spiritual practices.
2. With the eyes, one should see only idols of the Lord, saints and good souls, people better than oneself in religion and good

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action and other things that are important for a spiritual life.

3. With the sense of touch, one should feel and touch only objects needed for spiritual practice and necessary objects. One should touch the spouse and the children, too, as prescribed by moral standards given in the scriptures.
4. With the nose, one should smell only the articles, utilized in worship and other important objects.
5. With the taste-buds of tongue, one has also to be very careful. Following are some important facts to be remembered regarding the food one eats.

One should eat only when one feels hungry. One should not eat to the fill. Rather, one should eat only half the amount one feels like consuming. Half the stomach must be filled with food, one fourth with water and the rest, one fourth, with air for proper digestion. There is a famous saying — ***pānī khāo, roṭī piyo***, i.e., one should chew solid articles, properly, and swallow them only when they are converted into a fluid form, by chewing. And the fluids one should drink, sip by sip, and slowly. While having food, keep the mind quiet and silent.

No strict rule can be made regarding the amount of food to be consumed because one's diet depends on many factors like age, type of work that one is engaged in, season, taste, availability of food, physical condition, financial circumstances, state of health, etc. Still, here, we are giving a list of food to be avoided in particular seasons.

1. ***Hemanta* (*winter season*) (*November-December*)** — This season leads to phlegmatic disposition. Hence, avoid food that increases phlegm and eat food that controls and maintains phlegm.
2. ***Śiśira* (*winter season*) (*January-February*)** — This season leads to windy disposition. Hence, avoid food that increases wind but eat food that maintains wind's normalcy.

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3. *Vasanta* (*spring season*) (*March-April*) — This season leads to phlegmatic disposition. Hence, avoid food that increases phlegm and eat food that destroys phlegm and strikes a balance.
4. *Grīṣma* (*spring season*) (*May-June*) — This season leads to bilious disposition. Hence, avoid food that increases bile and eat food that destroys bile and strikes a balance.
5. *Varṣā* (*rainy season*) (*July-August*) — This season leads to bilious disposition. Hence, avoid food that increases bile and eat food that destroys excess bile.
6. *Śarada* (*autumn season*) (*September-October*) — This season leads to windy disposition. Hence, avoid food that increases wind and eat food that destroys excess wind.

(*The months mentioned are approximate, as seasons differ from country to country and also in a big country these differ from North to South and East to West.*)

In other words, one should avoid those foods, which increase a particular humour in that particular season. One should have food that creates a balance among wind, phlegm and bile humours.

It is important for a practitioner of Yoga and an aspirant to have *sāttvika* (pure) food. In this regard, Lord Kṛṣṇa says:

āyuḥ sattva balārogya sukha prīti vivardhanāḥ ।
rasyāḥ snigdhā sthirā hṛdyā āhārāḥ sāttvika priyāḥ ॥
— 17/8

A *sāttvika* person (spiritual aspirant) likes food, that increases age, intelligence, strength, health, happiness and love to God and also food that is juicy, not dry, with standing and which is to one's taste.

One should drink water one hour before food, a bit when having food and one hour after having food. One should not drink water at the start and end of a meal. It is good to start a meal with salad or sprouted pulses. At the end of meals, have buttermilk or Yogurd

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or diluted curd. It is better not to have seasonal fruit with meals. Have fruits, atleast, half an hour after, with added digestive spices.

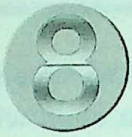
It is better for a practitioner of Yoga to follow this time-table for his meals. Early morning, between 6 and 7 a.m., one should have milk or buttermilk, lunch at 10-11 a.m., fruit at noon, some fluid at 1-2 p.m., dinner at 5-6 p.m., in winter and 6-7 p.m., in summer and milk at 8-9 p.m. By 10 p.m., one should be in bed and one should rise at 3 a.m. If needed, one can rest for an hour in the day. But one should not sleep in day time. The amount of food consumed should depend on one's capacity, as mentioned before — 2 : 1 : 1 — food, water and air. One should eat food that is conducive to one's health. One should take care of cleanliness in the preparation and consumption of the food.

It is also important to prepare food that is rich in nutrients and according to the taste of the eater. The way of serving should also be appealing. One should have food with a feeling of joy and thought of the Lord in one's mind. One should have pure feelings while having food. It would be better if one can convert having meal into a ritual. How, with every gulp, chant some *mantra*, a syllable, and feel that you are offering to God, who has manifested himself in the form of fire in your stomach. This shall not just improve health but also further one's spiritual progress.

After the day-meal, lie down straight on the back and breathe deeply, eight times, then, turn on the right side and breathe 16 times and, lying on the left side, breathe 32 to 64 times. After this, sit in *vajrāsana*, for some time and, then, continue with your work. After the dinner at night, sit in *vajrāsana* (the diamond pose) and do mental *japa*, chanting of syllable or meditation. Then, lie down straight on the back and enter into *yoga-nidrā*.

In a meal, it is wrong to have several dishes, food with too many spices and over-fried food because these cause anxiety, dishonour to certain food items, heaviness, laziness and many diseases, too.

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Science of Yogic Trance (Yoga-Nidrā Vijñāna)

INTRODUCTION

THE sleep of a practitioner of Yoga is of a particular spiritual type, which is called *yoga-nidrā*, i.e., conscious sleep or sleeping with awareness. General sleep is like being unconscious or a state of incomplete, ignorant rest. But *yoga-nidrā* is conscious sleep or being in a state of complete rest.

Through *yoga-nidrā*, one gains complete rest as one gets in very deep sleep and one feels fresh in a very short time. One feels fresher, energetic and active after *yoga-nidrā*. It frees the mind from all tensions and makes it happy and peaceful, because one has total rest. *Yoga-nidrā* should be the part of life of every human being, specially, a practitioner of Yoga and an aspirant. Only then, can one benefit fully from the science of Yoga.

PROCEDURE

Its brief method is as follows. Lie in *śavāsana* (the corpse-pose) with the legs a bit apart and the hands on the sides with the palms, facing upwards, in a comfortable position, close the eyes. Thereafter, follow these mental exercises:

1. *saṅkalpa* (a resolution);
2. let your awareness run through all body-parts;
3. activate various opposite feelings like hot-cold, heavy-light, happiness-sorrow, etc.;

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4. concentrate on the breathing;
5. let the awareness run through the *cakra*s of the *kuṇḍalinī;*
6. concentrate the mind on different auspicious objects, auspicious flowers, auspicious sceneries, picture of your master or God, sacred places, ocean, spiritual sounds, etc., by visualizing them;
7. concentrate on the soul as a self-luminous total bliss and pure consciousness, immanating all over; and
8. concentrate on the five elements and, then, repeat the *saṅkalpa.* Then chant the *śānti-pāṭha,* some auspicious *mantra*s, chantings which lead to bliss. Then, slowly move the various body-parts and open the eyes. Return to the normal position or go to sleep.

It is better not to sleep during *yoga-nidrā.* Then, the benefits would be more.

Benefits *Yoga-nidrā* leads to increase of true knowledge or *jñāna* and purification of the mind. It removes tension, pain in the body and tiredsomeness. It is very helpful in curing heart problems, high blood pressure, mental problems and worries. It harmonizes the various body systems and makes the body balanced. It is the best means of turning the mind, inwards. Hence, it is the best means of *pratyāhāra.*

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Science of Introversion (Pratyāhāra Vijñāna)

INTROVERSION of senses is possible only by introversion of mind. For that one has to understand one's own mind and its relation with *prāṇa* and the senses, its origin and its working method, etc.

WHAT IS MIND

Mind is a subtle force made up of subtle matter. It is a bundle of notions, impressions, thoughts, desires and cravings. When *prāṇa* vibrates on mind, it generates thoughts. The seed of mind is ego. Mind is the synthesis of the functions of the five sense-organs of perception or knowledge. It co-ordinates the sensory and motor organs to execute any external worldly work. There are three qualities in the mind — *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. The *sāttvika* mind is the pure mind, whereas *rājasika* and *tāmasika* minds are impure minds. When the *sattva* is active, mind is calm and serene. When the *rajas* preponderates, the mind is agitated and excited. While the *tamas* is predominant, the mind is dull and foolish. Control *tamas*, through *rajas*, and control *rajas* by *sattva*.

A knowledge of these qualities or attributes of mind and their operation is very indispensable. Then, alone, you can free yourself from their clutches. Actually, these three qualities are of ignorance of nature and the mind is a product of ignorance of nature. These qualities only delude man and bind him to the worldly processes. These qualities are not only the primary constituents of nature but they are the bases of all substances, including the five elements (ether, air, fire, water and earth). Transcending these three qualities

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is transcendence of mind, by which one can attain freedom, perfection and immortality.

INFLUENCE OF SATTVA

When *sattva* grows, man becomes righteous, devotion develops and knowledge dawns. It is serene and has the characteristics of efflugence, harmony, goodness, purity, light, stainless like crystal. It endows man with discriminative power, pure reason and pure understanding. It builds up sublime and divine thoughts, clarity and gives penetrative insight. The door of intuition opens by *sattva*. This can be developed by association with the wise, study of religious books, *sāttvika* food, *japa*, etc.

POWER OF RAJAS

When *rajas* dominates, man is full of passions and activity. So, it causes distraction and restlessness. It is thirst of action and attachment to action. It creates the hunger of power, wealth, prestige, position, name and fame; that means it makes man ambitious and, thus, an extrovert. It builds up cravings and desires, especially, for sensual pleasures. A *rājasika* man can never be contented eventhough his desires are insatiable, like a flame. He will be greedy. Therefore, misery appears to him as happiness, pain as pleasure and sorrow as joy. He will have a perverted intellect and, thus, no power of discrimination or proper understanding one's own spiritual and worldly duties. Money power or physical power is the only goal of such people.

SWAY OF TAMAS

This is inertia, darkness and is the cause of all miseries. It binds a man by indolence, carelessness, lethargy, sloth and sleep. Thus, a *tāmasika* man has no power of judgement. He does foolish actions and is thoughtless or ignorant. He has no inclination to work and

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his actions will not be guided by reason or understanding. Such a state is mistaken by some people for sattva, but is wrong; because unrighteousness is the outcome of *rajas* and *tamas* or both.

These qualities not only affect the mind but, the whole world, because the world is an effect of Nature and, these three, are the constituents of nature. Thus, there is nothing in this world without these three qualities. One has to analyse all phenomena and know well their characteristics, so that one can transcend them and rest in a Supreme Being.

Through *niṣkāma karma* and *yuktāhāra*, an aspirant tries to turn the mind, inwards, by increasing his wisdom and feeling of detachment towards worldly objects. Similarly *yoga-nidrā* helps to make the mind calm and, ultimately, establish control over it. Still, without *pratyāhāra*, the mind cannot be fully turned inside. Hence, *pratyāhāra* has been described in a separate chapter.

According to Patañjali —

svaviṣayā samprayoge cittasvarūpānukāra ivendriyāṇām pratyāhāraḥ । — ***Yoga-Sūtra*, 2/55**

Pratyāhāra = Introvesion means even when the senses are related with the objects, the mind, without getting distracted, views the consciousness. That means it beholds itself as a seer and never becomes one with the scene.

The link between *yama*, *niyama*, *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma* — the external practices — and *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna* and *samādhi* — the internal practices is called *pratyāhāra*. Hence, it is a very important practice.

The science of *pratyāhāra* can be divided into three parts —

(1) *ātmanivedana* or *prārthanā vijñāna* (surrender or prayer),

(2) *japa-yoga* (chanting), and

(3) *ajapā-japa* (natural chanting).

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ATMANIVEDANA OR PRĀRTHANĀ VIJÑĀNA (SCIENCE OF SURRENDER OR PRAYER)

Prārthanā, i.e., prayer means to express your feelings of reverence towards one, whom you respect. That respected person could be one's parents, *guru* (master) or God.

Prārthanā is a very easy and miraculous method of fulfilling an aim. It banishes all paucity from life. It makes a coward brave. It makes a weak person strong and an evil person good. For success through prayer it is important to forget the self and devote oneself fully into the feet of the Lord. For this, one should adopt virtues, like, humility, politeness, patience, forbearance and obedience. *Prārthanā* is a very easy way of devoting the self. In a prayer, the feelings of the heart are allowed to flow freely. There are two types of *prārthanā* (prayer), *nirālamba* (un-supported) and *sālamba* (supported).

Nirālamba prārthanā is also called *mugdha prārthanā*. Those who are totally uneducated adopt this way of praying. In this, there are no restrictions of language or process. This type of praying is feeling and emotions-oriented. *Nirālamba prārthanā* means to speak or sing one's feelings for one's deity in whichever language one is fluent or to express one's feelings through devoted silence. As Lord Kṛṣṇa has said —

sarvadharmān parityajya māmekam śaraṇam vraja ।

— *Gīta*, 18/66

Give up all your 'I'ness-'my'ness and surrender to me.

And also by Patañjali the same thing has been propounded —

īśvarapraṇidhānād vā ।

— *Pātañjala Yoga-Sūtra*, 1/23

However, in *sālamba prārthanā*, one prays, as prescribed by the texts or tradition. One has to be well-versed in the language. This

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type of worshipping can also be of three types — Vedic, *smārta* and *laukika*.

For Vedic worship, one has to, first, learn the proper pronunciation of the Vedic *mantra*s and also know about the *ṛṣi* (the seer of the *mantra*), *chanda* (the metre of the *mantra*), *devatā* (deity), *bīja* (the code of the *mantra*), *śakti* (the trigger), *kīlaka* (lock and *viniyoga* (the offering) related to a particular *mantra*, the syllable. One has to daily have a bath before starting the practice. One has to wear fresh clothes, sit on a particular worship-mat with a pure heart and meditate on the divine form of the deity, after having performed *ṛṣyādi nyāsa* (establishing the *ṛṣi*s etc., in our body in different specific organs who created that particular practice), *hṛdayadyaṅganyāsa* (to establish the diety, etc., in the different parts of our body) and *karanyāsa* (to establish the deity, etc., in the different fingers of our hand). These are very essential for the purification of all the parts of our body, before using a particular practice for prayer, without which the deity cannot be pleased. If there is a special verse for meditation, then, one should contemplate on the divine form of the deity in one's heart and devote oneself on his feet. Thereafter, one should chant the Vedic *mantra* 2, 3, 5, 11, 21, 51, 108 or, more times, with full concentration. In the end, one should offer one's chanting into the feet of the deity to appease.

SMĀRTA PRĀRTHANĀ

Smārta prārthanā is like Vedic *prārthanā*. This is also in the form of *mantra*s and hymns and can be found in the Purāṇas, *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*. Through this type of worship, the celestial gods, demons, devotees and great seers attained divine boons.

LAUKIKA PRĀRTHANĀ

Laukika prārthanā is that type of worship, which cannot be found in the Vedas or the ancient texts, but which is neither against the

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basic principles, set up by the Vedas, in this regard nor fruitless. The *stotra*s (divine hymns), written by Śaṅkarācārya, Rāmānujācārya, Vallabhācārya, Madhvācārya, etc., in Sanskrit; the hymns and devotional songs, written by Sūradāsa, Tulasīdāsa, Kabīradāsa and Mīrābāī, etc., in local dialect; and the various devotional songs, written or sung by saints and devotees in their regional languages all come under this category. The process of such worship is prescribed by tradition.

JAPA-YOGA (SCIENCE OF CHANTING)

This is the best means of purification of the mind. Although it is harder than *prārthanā* (prayer), yet, if done with *tapasyā* (penance), it proves quick in producing result. *Japa* means repeating a powerful spiritual word. Repeating a particular word in the mind for progress on the path of attaining oneness with the Supreme Being or *Brahman* (the all-pervading self) is called *japa-yoga*. For this, two things are important — the *mantra*, to be chanted and the *māla* i.e., rosary, to keep count of the chantings.

Mantra, a syllable, is not an ordinary word or group of words. Rather, it is extraordinary and, through its resonance, the deep-rooted tendencies and passions are banished. *Mantra* is a group of words instilled with the powers of some *ṛṣi*. Hence, it is better to get a *mantra* from a *guru* (master). The best *mantra* for an aspirant is one which is in perfect harmony with his soul and which awakens devotion in him. There are infinite *mantra*s, pertaining to the different gods, goddesses and deities in different religions and sects. Hence, it is best to ask the *guru* which *mantra* would suit one and, then, one should get *dīkṣā* (spiritual initiation in a particular *mantra*-practice) from the *guru*.

A *māla* i.e., rosary has 108 beads. Each bead is secured with a knot which represents the worldly bonds and is called *brahma-granthi*. Other than the 108 beads, there is one more, which is tied separately, to the main string of the rosary. It is called *sumeru*. It

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helps in keeping a tab on the number of rounds of the rosary. There are rosaries with 11, 21, 27, 33, 36 and 54 beads for special purposes. Rosaries, with beads of *rudrākṣa* (seed of a sacred tree), *sphaṭika* (rock-crystal), etc., are used for different purposes.

There can be four types of *japa* — *likhita* (written), *vaikharī* (oral), *upaṁśu* (murmuring) and *mānasika* (mental). Those with a very fickle and restless mind should practice *likhita japa*. To write the *mantra* in beautiful handwriting on a page with a feeling of devotion and love for one's deity is called *likhita japa*. When, through this type of *japa*, the senses become calm and concentrated, then, one should start *vaikharī japa*. In *vaikharī japa*, one should sit in a meditative pose and relax the mind and the body. Then, one should close the eyes and forming the image of the deity in one's mind, one should chant the *mantra*, clearly and loudly. But this should be practised alone in the room. One should concentrate on the resonance of the *mantra*. This is called *vaikharī japa*.

Then, seated as before, if one chants the *mantra* silently, murmuring in such a way that the *mantra* can be heard only by himself and not even by a person sitting beside, is called *upāṁśu japa*. Silent chanting does not mean that one can get away with incorrect pronunciation. Rather, it means that if someone else is in the room he or she should be able to see your lips moving but not hear the *mantra*. The last is *mānasika japa*. In it, one is to sit as before but one should chant the *mantra* in the mind without even moving the lips or tongue and keeping the mouth shut. This is the best method of chanting.

The preliminary aspirants should practise *likhita japa*. A little advanced category of aspirants could practise the other three types. (1) those capable of only *vaikharī japa*; (2) those capable of both *vaikharī* and *upāṁśu japa*s; and (3) those who chant one round of *vaikharī*, two rounds *upāṁśu* and three rounds *mānasika*. The highest category of aspirants, i.e., adepts for elephant practise only *mānasika japa*.

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By chanting a *mantra* daily right from the day one, you get it from the Master, unto the time of death, is called *nitya japa*, eternal or obligatory chant. Chanting a certain number in a certain period of days, as directed by the *mantra*, is called *anuṣṭhāna*. The highest form of *anuṣṭhāna* is called *puraścaraṇa*, which is quite tough.

RULES FOR THE CHANTING OF MANTRAS

1. The rosary should not be seen by others. Hence, it should be held in the hand, inside a cloth pouch, called *gomukhī*.
2. One should not cross the *sumeru* the 109th bead, when moving the beads.
3. One should not touch the forefinger and the little finger to the rosary.
4. Pronunciation of the *mantra* should be clear and correct.
5. The speed of chanting should be constant so that it is in rhythm.
6. Chanting should be done without any desire.
7. Do not reveal the *mantra* to anyone.
8. One should choose a particular spot, a particular sitting posture a particular cotton or woolen piece of cloth or blanket and a particular time, daily, for the chanting.
9. It is more effective to chant the *mantra*, facing the north or east.
10. Keep concentrating on the meaning of the *mantra* and the deity, whom one is worshipping while chanting the *mantra*. It is said in the text *Pātanjala Yoga-Sūtra* (1/27) — ***tajjapastadarthabhāvanañca***.

The mind is clouded by three obstacles on the path of Yoga — restlessness, impurity and foolishness. The aim of *japa* is to free the mind of these three. When the mind is pure, then, it becomes capable of realising the soul.

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AJAPĀ-JAPA (NON-STOP ETERNAL CHANTING)

To keep repeating the *mantra* is called *japa*. The *japa* becomes *ajapā*, when the *mantra* gets repeated in the mind on its own. *Ajapā-japa* goes on, subconsciously, all the time, while *japa* is done consciously.

Ajapā-japa is a complete *sādhanā* (spiritual practice) in itself. If this starts and one becomes aware of it, then, one can very soon enter into the state of meditation, i.e., *dhyāna*. This type of *japa* helps in banishing passions, desires and fears and makes the mind very pure. When there is an explosion of the latent passions and tendencies, one should not react. Rather, one should just watch them like an audience. Otherwise, these passions can lead to one's spiritual downfall. This type of *japa* also frees the mind and the body of all ailments and weaknesses.

Generally, "*soham*" *mantra* is used for this purpose, but any other *mantra* also can be used.

In the beginning, i.e., first stage, the aspirant should concentrate on the breathing. He should practise this in a meditative pose. Breathe in and feel the chest and abdomen rising, as the air enters, and, when breathing out, feel the chest abdomen region, becoming empty. After concentrating on the breathing for sometime, in the second stage, feel the resonance of the sound *so*, while inhaling, and, *ham*, when exhaling. Do this for each breath. After one month of practice, reverse the process.

In second stage first breathe out and feel the resonance of *ham* and, then, breathing in, and feel the resonance of *so*. In other words, in the second stage, chant *hamso*.

In the third stage, chant *so haṁso*.

In the fourth stage, continuously, chant mentally only *soham, soham* so that there is no break between *so* and *ham*.

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In the fifth stage, chant, mentally, performing *khecharī-mudrā* and *ujjāyī prāṇāyāma*.

In the sixth stage, move the conscience on the *cakra*s of the *kuṇḍalinī*. If possible, continue to be aware of the resonance and try to concentrate the *prāṇa* on each *cakra*. In the last stage, one becomes a witness to what was happening in the earlier stages. One has to be fully conscious, in this stage, and not fall asleep.

When a person is able to continue in the final stage he enters into the highest level of meditation and, then, into *samādhi*.

PRECAUTIONS AND GUIDELINES

Practise withdrawal of senses, one by one, beginning with the most turbulent one and this has to be done, gently not vehemently. Detach your mind from its desired objects. The best way is to withdraw the senses, too, along with *prāṇa*, which is the cause of action. You have to be alert and vigilant in annihilating all desires with the sword of dispassion and the axe of discrimination. For this, one cannot do on one's accord, so *guru* and God's grace are essential. For that, devotion and surrender are the tools.

Observance of silence, moderation in diet, steadiness in pose, dispassion, regularity in the practice of *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma*, patience, contentment, perseverance, tenacity, celibacy, seclusion, discrimination between the real and the non-real are all aids to *pratyāhāra*.

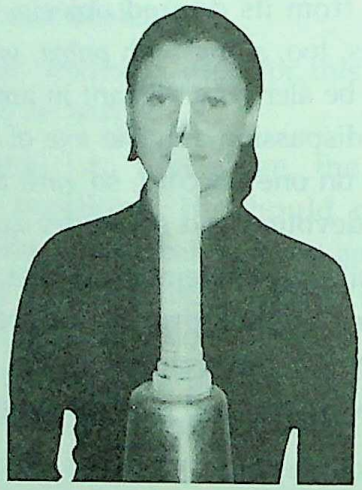
The obstacles to *pratyāhāra* are passions and desires, too much talking, too much mixing with worldly people, too much worldly activity, too much food, too much walking, too much curiosity in external affairs, slackness and laziness in practices, etc. Every practitioner should be careful about one's own wavery mind and recognise by self-analysis which quality is dominant in him. Accordingly, one has to decide the practices that he has to adopt and way of life that he has to lead to attain salvation, at the earliest.

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Science of Concentration (Trāṭaka Vijñāna)

For purification of the mind, the thoughts and the senses; they have to be directed inwards. For moving from the gross to the subtle and from the outer world into the inner world, *trāṭaka* is a very powerful practice, just like *yoga-nidrā*. Although *yoga-nidrā* is *pratyāhāra*, *trāṭaka* is *dhāraṇā*. Because, *trāṭaka* is the final stage of *pratyāhāra* and the first stage of *dhāraṇā*, it can be said to be a link between the two.



Trāṭaka

Trāṭaka can be of two types — internal and external. *Trāṭaka* means to gaze, continuously, at some object without blinking. In the external *trāṭaka*, the eyes remain open and they do not blink. In the internal *trāṭaka*, the eyes are closed but the eyeballs do not move. In external *trāṭaka*, one can concentrate on several things like flame of a lamp, picture of one's deity or *guru* (master), one's own reflection in the mirror, a flower, a fruit or leaf, a black or red

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dot on a piece of white paper, *oṁ*, *yantras*, picture of *cakras* of the *kuṇḍalinī*, rising sun, moon, star, flowing water, mountain, open sky and any natural vista.

Internal *trāṭaka* happens on its own, when the tired eyes are closed. In it, whatever one was seeing outside starts to appear inside as the internal vision. In the beginning, this is fine but, later on, one should rather concentrate on the third eye, i.e., eyebrow centre, five elements, thoughts, breathing and *oṁ*, keeping the eyes closed.

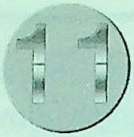
Benefits *Trāṭaka* is a process of gaining divine powers. Still, a *sādhaka*, an aspirant, should not be tempted by such powers. One's aim should be purification of the mind and final emancipation from the cycle of birth and death.

Trāṭaka makes the vision clear, sharp and flawless. It activates the third eye and inner vision. It increases the concentration, will power and internal subtle energy. It frees the mind from evil thoughts and when the latent tendencies of the mind come to the fore, it becomes easy to decide on one's spiritual practice. It activates the latent powers of the brain and makes the intelligence sharp. It increases the power of hypnotism and enchantment. One becomes capable of reading the minds of others.

PRECAUTIONS

One should remember that the image on which one is concentrating is pure and moral. It should not arouse one's passions. Otherwise the *trāṭaka* won't be beneficial. One should not stress the eyes, too much. After a few moments of practice, when the eyes become tired, one should wash them with cold water. One should practise less in summers and more in winters. Those suffering from problems of eyesight should practise external *trāṭaka* less.

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Science of Fixation (Dhāraṇā Vijñāna)

INTRODUCTION

After presenting three chapters on *pratyāhāra* (*yoga-nidrā*, *prārthanā* and *trāṭaka*) and two chapters on *vairāgya* (*niṣkāma karma yoga* and *yuktāhāra*), now, you are being introduced into a chapter on *dhāraṇā*.

mālā to kar me phirāī, jībha phirāī mukha māhī ।
manavā to cahū diśī phirai, ye to sumirana nāhī ॥

If the rosary is moving in the hand, the tongue is moving in the mouth, chanting and if thoughts in the mind are wandering, i.e., the mind moves here, there, everywhere and we are totally unaware of this, then, this is not *japa*.

According to this saying, until the mind is not stilled, spiritual practice cannot be started. Hence, when the mind has been turned inwards through the practice of *pratyāhāra*, then, one has to practise to fix the mind on one's goal.

Dhāraṇā is concentrating the introvert mind and senses. In the beginning, one can fix on an external object, but it is a mental process. One will have to cultivate attention to develop concentration. A serene, cheerful, tension-free mind should be trained to sit in the same place and, some times on the same seat, in the same *āsana*, regularly. Reading novels, newspapers, visiting cinemas, watching TV and all other worldly activities should be

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stopped, slowly. Patience and protraction are the basic tools of *dhāraṇā*, because silencing the bubbling thoughts and calming the surging emotions is not very easy. *Bhakti yogī*s (devotees) usually concentrate on the heart, *rāja yogī*s on third eye and *jñāna yogī*s on top of the head; others, who are in intermittant stages, concentrate on nose, navel, *mūlādhāra*, etc.

Remember, not to concentrate, once the mind gets tired. That means, don't do, forcibly. Whenever irrelevant thoughts come up, either be indifferent or neglect and let them pass away. You need not try to destroy them, as they are not permanent. They will perish on their own. You can substitute divine thoughts. In this way, slowly and steadily, you can develop concentration and open the doors of knowledge. In Yoga *sūtra*s, also, the definition of *dhārāṇā* has been given, while *Haṭha-Yoga-Pradīpikā* and other texts discuss about the different techniques, which are being briefly dealt here.

The great *ṛṣi*, Patañjali, said —

deśabandhaḥ cittasya dhāraṇā ॥ — **3/1**

To fix the mind on a certain goal is called *dhāraṇā*.

For this, the aspirant shall have to do two things. We shall focus on them in two separate parts (1) *cidākāśa dhāraṇā*; and (2) *antarmauna*.

For making the mind capable of *cidākāśa dhāraṇā*, the aspirant shall have to practise *bāhya pañca dhāraṇā*. These five are *pārthiva dhāraṇā*, *jalīya dhāraṇā*, *āgneya dhāraṇā*, *vāyavīya dhāraṇā* and *dhvani dhāraṇā*.

In ***pārthiva dhāraṇā*** (fixation on earth element) one has to concentrate with open eyes on a picture of *oṁ*, the *guru*, some god or goddess, flower, fruit or any gross spiritual object of one's liking etc.

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In *jalīya dhāraṇā* (fixation on water element) one has to concentrate the mind by looking constantly at a river, waterfall or pond, sitting on the banks etc.

Āgneya dhāraṇā (fixation on Fire element) is also called *trāṭaka* which has been discussed before.

In *vāyavīyā dhāraṇā* (fixation on air element), one concentrates the mind on the breathing, fixing one's gaze on the tip of the nose etc.

In *dhvani dhāraṇā* (fixation on ether element), one concentrates the mind on some sound, like the resonance of *oṁ*, some music or sound of some musical instrument etc.

When a person becomes well versed in the *pañca tattva dhāraṇā* (*dhāraṇā* of the five elements), then, he should start the practice of internal *dhāraṇā*, which is also called *cidākāśa dhāraṇā*.

CIDĀKĀŚA DHĀRAṆĀ

When the senses are turned inwards, through the practice of the aforesaid postures, then the mind has to be fixed on one object. This is called *dhāraṇā*. To turn the mind inwards is *pratyāhāra*.

The practices of *yoga-nidrā*, *prārthanā*, *japa*, *ajapā-japa* and *trāṭaka*, that have been discussed in the previous chapters, are together known as *pratyāhāra*. These are the preliminary practices. In the final stage, one has to concentrate on the *cakras* and remain still, like a witness. This is called *dhāraṇā*. Hence, *pratyāhāra* is followed by *dhāraṇā* and these prepare an aspirant for meditation and *samādhi*.

Cidākāśa dhāraṇā are of two types — (1) *antaḥ darśana* (inner visualization); (2) *cidākāśa darśana* (cerebral visualization or conscious visualization).

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ANTAḤ DARŚANA (INNER VISUALIZATION)

In *antaḥ darśana* (the inner visualization), one has to visualize all the events and actions, that took place outside, in day or night time in the mind, like a dream. But one should not fall asleep and one should be aware that this witnessing is not actually a dream but a conscious effort. In this practice, one has to recall and visualize all the important events and actions, involved in it, right from the time of waking up, in the morning to the time of lying down to sleep.

You have to visualize exactly all details like going to a friend's place, the exact location of his house, the vehicle you used and the people you saw. Or, you could recall going to the temple, the priest, who greeted you, the various utensils kept there, the ritual performed there, the worship you performed and the *prasāda* (sweets offered to the Gods), that you got. If you travelled, then, recall the bus or the train you used, the things you saw on the way, the various stations or stops that came on the way and the hustle and bustle, there. You could also recall natural scenes and events, the stars, the sun, the moon which you saw or the different colours and shapes, that you witnessed. If a student, one could recall the scene of one's college or school, one's class, the teacher teaching the class, etc.

In the final stage of this practice, one should pronounce the names of the objects and persons, mentally, that one recalls. This practice increases one's memory and prepares one for further practice.

CIDĀKĀŚA DARŚANA (CEREBRAL OR CONSCIOUS VISUALIZATION)

The dark and black space that one visualizes in the place of the third eye, i.e., the eyebrow centre, when one closes the eyes is called *cidākāśa*. Concentrating the mind on this spot and, then,

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visualizing the following types of scenes is called *cidākāśa darśana*.

Sit in a meditative pose. Close the eyes and position the hands in *jñāna* or *cīn-mudrā*. Concentrate on the sounds around you. Then visualize your own body in the mind. Visualize your physical form seated on the floor. Concentrate the mind on the breathing. Then, concentrate it on the *cidākāśa*. It has no shape, but if one continues to concentrate, then, after some time, different colours start to appear. Keep viewing them. Now visualize this dark space, not just on the third eye, but all around you, everywhere. One can pronounce the names of the colours one is seeing, mentally. Now, visualize your own form but with a divine radiance in the *cidākāśa*. Concentrate on the sound of *oṁ*, emanating from there. Keep viewing the images that might appear. When ending the practice, perform the reverse, i.e., first, concentrate on the breathing, then, the body and, lastly, on the sounds all around. Then, get up.

ANTARMAUNA (INNER SILENCE)

Mauna means to be silent outside and inside. In order to reach this state, one shall have to cut oneself off from the commotion outside and restlessness of the mind and the senses. In this practice, a person has an experience of being a witness to everything, which is very important for meditation.

Antarmauna can be divided into three stages: (1) *vāk-saṁyama* (control of speech); (2) *vāṅg-mauna* (silence of speech); and (3) *antarmauna* (silence of mind, too).

The first stage of *antarmauna* is called ***vāk-saṁyama*** (control of speech). The eyes, ears and the tongue destroy the peace of the mind and make it tense and worried. Among these three — speech creates most disturbances. Hence, if the speech is controlled, the rest two are controlled on their own. For the practice of *vāk-saṁyama*, one has to get into the habit of speaking less. For this,

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remember the following tips — do not stress your point too much, speak after due thought, do not get into an argument, do not get involved in criticising others, do not get perturbed by adverse circumstances, do not speak anything that might hurt anyone and, finally, keep your words and voice sweet. Hence, *vāk-saṁyama* means to speak for the good of others, keeping their respect and feelings in mind.

The second stage of *antarmauna* is ***vāṅg-mauna*** (silence of speech). The ancient texts state — ***maunam sarvārtha sādhanam*** (silence is the best way of attaining all wishes). Complete rest of the tongue is called *vāṅg-mauna*. When a person is totally silent, the voice of the Lord becomes obvious. This practice increases power of thought, memory and intelligence. Such a person can, then, read the mind of others. Through complete silence, one can know about the restlessness of the mind, the hidden evil tendencies and one's passions. Then, it becomes easy to control them and transform the mind, completely, through the practices, suggested in the ancient texts. An aspirant gains knowledge, divine power and several virtues, like the capability of solving all problems, influencing others through one's speech, etc., because the divine voice works and not his selfish voice.

The third stage of ***antarmauna*** can be divided into five sub-stages.

In the ***first stage,*** one has to remain aware of the events and the sounds, outside. One should hear and see everything but not react. One has to remain a mere silent witness.

In the ***second stage,*** one has to curb the tendency of the eyes and ears to be directed outwards into external objects, i.e., one has to close the eyes and ears and concentrate on the mind, on the thoughts, on its reactions and the various images, being generated in it. Do witness all this but be aware of the self. Be like a witness and do not get involved in the thoughts or the scenario.

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In the ***third stage,*** go through the first and the second stages, alternatively. In other words, practise outer and inner awareness.

In the ***fourth stage,*** sit in a peaceful and isolated place, generate images in the mind and witness them. This practice is called *manorājya*. These are of two types — natural and artificial. The former is to be avoided and the latter has to be practised. Generally, *manorājya* is said to be an obstacle on the way to meditation and *samādhi,* because, in it, a person loses his awareness and becomes completely engrossed and wastes his time. This is natural *manorājya* here, i.e., in fourth stage too the person does create images in the mind and witnesses them but he does not get involved in them. This is artificial *manorājya*. In natural *manorājya,* the aspirant does not create images but, whenever the mind wishes, due to passions, starts to imagine things, he should be aware of it and not get engrossed into it. For this, the aspirant will have to be alert, all the 24 hrs. This is very difficult. Previously, it was mentioned that the former is to be avoided. But, if an adept can practice, being alert all the 24 hrs, then, it is not harmful. Such an aspirant gains a capability to curb unnecessary imaginations and be able to utilize the mind's energy, properly and positively. Hence, here, it proves helpful rather than be an obstacle.

In the ***fifth stage,*** the mind has to be made totally calm. One has to concentrate on the divine conscience, that is formless. One has to concentrate on divine light. This is a state of stunned silence for the mind. It is like unconsciousness. The difference is that, in unconsciousness, the person is not aware of anything but, here, the person is aware of the state of total silence and also experiences the all-pervading consciousness-existence-bliss.

When the aspirant has perfected this practice, his mind becomes prepared for meditation.

Up to now the different techniques of *dhāraṇā* were discussed as per the Himālayan tradition. Now, let us see the different techniques as adopted by my master's tradition.

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The key to *dhāraṇā* is that, first, you have to recognize your mind, i.e., decide the quality of your mind, then, accordingly, you can choose the object of concentration. Once you start on anything, then you have to avoid the mental confrontation, that will increase the ability of concentration. Relaxation and concentration are interrelated. Therefore, before starting practice perform some relaxation postures, little *prāṇāyāma, yoga-nidrā* (little), *prārthanā* and *trāṭaka* besides *niṣkāma karma yoga* and *yuktāhāra*. Training of mind, systematically, is very much necessary for transformation of consciousness. Training of mind constitutes three steps. Firstly, concept of *dhāraṇā* should be clear, secondly, intensity of experience and, finally, intensity of concentration. To make the second step successful, you have to practise inner visualization. But during this process, one will have to face many obstacles. They are as follows:

1. Visions — both good, like, angels, demi-gods, etc., and bad like snakes, lions, devils, etc., come up. If you are able to remain calm and unaffected, then, your practice is proceeding unimpeded.
2. *Kuṇḍalinī* awakening — a person, in whom partial awakening of *kuṇḍalinī* has occured, a *suṣumnā* channel has not been aroused, *dhāraṇā* is impossible. For this *prāṇāyāma* perfection is essential.
3. Sensitiveness — sensual and emotional feelings develop in the lower centres, forcing you into the external world, because purification of *prāṇa* and psychic centres increases the production of sexual fluid; for this, celebacy has to be maintained and sexual energy has to be transformed under the guidence of an expert master.
4. Encountering illness
5. Disillusion
6. Changing practices

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7. Applying short-cuts.
8. Excessive social activities.
9. Irregular lifestyle.
10. Imbalanced diet.,
11. Unnecessary tensions.

Once you are capable of overcoming obstacles and you have trained your mind, you can practise the different techniques of *dhāraṇā*, mentioned in Yoga, Tantra and Upaniṣads. Some have already been discussed. The rest will be dealt with briefly, now.

The techniques are as follows, which are to be done under the guidance of an expert master.

YOGIC AND TĀNTRIC DHĀRAṆĀ

1. *Kāya sthairyam* — Body stability.
2. *Cakra śuddhi* — Purification of psychic centres.
3. *Ajapā-japa* — Done in 10 stages.
   - one — Frontal passage rotation.
   - two — Spinal passage rotation.
   - three — Frontal passage rotation with *ujjayī*.
   - four — Spinal passage rotation with *ujjayī*.
   - five — *Ārohaṇa-avarohaṇa* rotation.
   - six — *Iḍā-piṅgalā* elliptical rotation.
   - seven — *Piṅgalā-iḍā* elliptical rotation.
   - eight — *Iḍā-piṅgalā* spinal rotation.
   - nine — *Piṅgalā-iḍā* spinal rotation.
   - ten — opening the *cakra*s.
4. *Trāṭaka* — Done in 4 stages.
   - one — external concentration.
   - two — external-internal concentration.

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three — internal concentration.
four — void concentration.

UPANIṢADIC DHĀRAṆĀ

1. External ether concentration.
2. Internal ether concentration.
3. Cerebral ether concentration.
4. Hearty ether concentration.
5. Little ether concentration.
6. Miscellaneous concentration.
   - one — Five elements concentration.
   - two — *Cakra*s concentration.
   - three — Five sheaths concentration.
   - four — Five *prāṇa* concentration.
7. Destructivity concentration.
8. The five concentration together.

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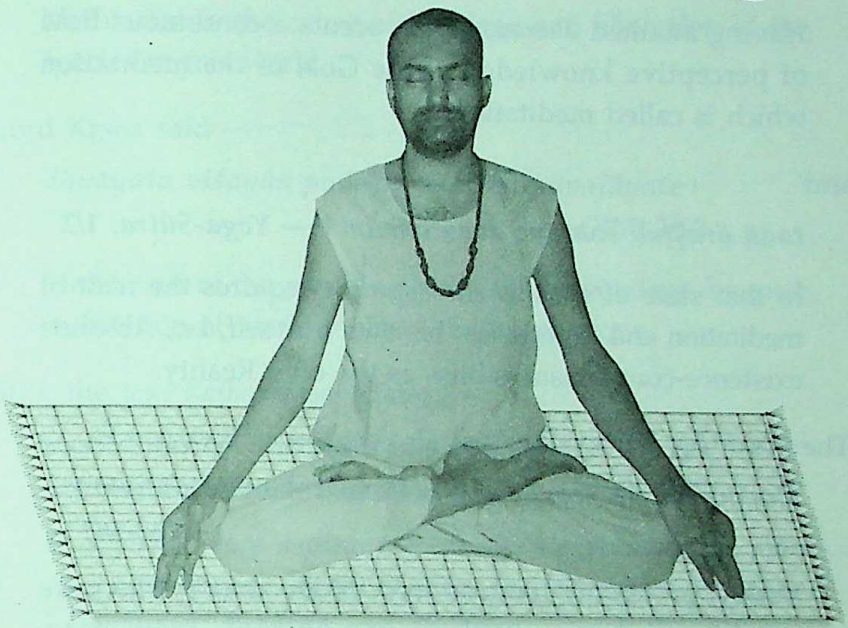
Science of Meditation (Dhyāna Vijñāna)

INTRODUCTION

CONCENTRATION was just fixing the mind; but meditation is allowing one idea to flow, continuously. Hence, Meditation is an unbroken flow of knowledge of the object on which one meditates. A person, who meditates, at least, half an hour, daily, will be able to face the battle of life with peace and spiritual strength. Meditation kills all pains, suffering and sorrow. It is the most powerful mental and nervine tonic. The divine energy flows freely into an aspirant during meditation and puts up a benign, soothing influence on the mind, sense-organs and nerves. Thus, the whole body gets rejuvenated. Meditation is the key to unlock the secrets of life, to open the doors of intuitive knowledge and realms to eternal bliss. For meditation, one has to cultivate burning dispassion, burning aspiration or an intense longing for self-realization. Meditation cannot be attained in a short while. One will have to struggle hard for a long time, be vigilant, diligent and persevering, with a lot of patience. All doubts are cleared, on its own, gradually. A mysterious inner voice will guide you. The best time for Meditation is early morning, between 4 and 6 a.m.

In the beginning, the mind will need a concrete object for meditation. For that, take the form of your master or God and meditate on all the good attributes, such as, omnipotence, perfection, purity, freedom, absolute knowledge, etc. Later, practise meditation on abstract things, like, effulgence of the sun, splendour of the moon, twinkle of the stars, magnificence of the

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dhyāna vigyāna

ocean, with its infinite nature. Then, slowly go a step forward and compare these abstract things with your own self. Finally, compare the ocean to the infinite self-consciousness-bliss-knowledge-existence, and the waves, foams and icebergs to the various names and forms of the world. Gaze on the mountains, rivers, the formless air and the all-pervading ether. This will lead you to the realization of the nameless and formless Soul. This stage of meditation is explained below:

dhyānam nirviṣayam manaḥ ।

Meditation is the state of mind, in which it is free of object-perception.

According to this statement, *dhyāna* means diverting the mind from worldly objects and trying to concentrate it on the self. To concentrate on the self is *samādhi*.

This is why *maharṣi* Patañjali has said —

tatra pratyayaikatānatā dhyānam । — ***Yoga-Sūtra,* 3/2**

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Having attained *dhāraṇā*, there occurs a continuous flow of perceptive knowledge of the Goal of the meditation which is called meditation.

and

tadā draṣṭuḥ svarūpe avasthānam । — ***Yoga-Sūtra*, 1/2**

In that state of *samādhi* the aspirant acquires the fruit of meditation and experiences his own true self, i.e., Absolute existence-consciousness-bliss as the only Reality.

The great *yogī* Yājñavalkya has also said —

dhyānamātma svarūpasya vedanam manasaḥ khalu ।
— ***YYS*, 9/2**

Surely, preceiving the true form of the soul by the pure mind is called as meditation.

and

samādhi samatāvasthā jīvasya paramātmanoḥ ।
brahmaṇyeva sthitiryā sā samādhiḥ pratyagātmanoḥ ॥
— ***YYS*, 10/2**

So, the result of meditation is *samādhi*, which is experiencing the non-duality of the individual and the supreme. To experience the individual as absolute bliss and non-dual to the supreme is called *samādhi*, i.e., contemplation or liberation.

Hence, there can be no state of *samādhi* without *dhyāna*, i.e., meditation and without *samādhi*, there can be no *mokṣa*, i.e., liberation.

All animals, birds and humans meditate. This is why, *yogī* Yājñavalkya has said —

dhyānameva hi jantūnām kāraṇam bandhamokṣayoḥ ।
— ***YYS*, 10/2**

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Meditation is the cause of Bondage and liberation of the species in this world.

Lord Kṛṣṇa said —

dhyāyato viśayān puṁśaḥ saṅgasteṣūpajāyate ।
— *Gītā*, 2/62

Meditation of the worldly objects causes bondage, because meditation of worldly object creates passions.

Still, the text *Kaṭhopaniṣad* states —

kaścid-dhīrāḥ pratyagātmānmaikṣad
āvṛttacakuṣramṛtattvamiccan । **— *KU*, 2/1/1**

***It is only a rare-aspirant, wishing to experience his own true form and to attain eternity i.e., liberation, practises* pratyāhāra, dhāraṇā *and* dhyāna.**

Hence, we can conclude that a spiritual practitioner, after having detached himself from all the high positions, pleasures and comforts and having turned the senses, inwards, establishes his mind in the supreme through *dhāraṇā*. Thereafter, in order to always feel one with the Supreme, he should practise meditation. This is why, Lord Kṛṣṇa says —

yathā dīpo nivātastho neṅgate sopamā smṛtā.
yogino yatacittasya yuñjato yogamātmanaḥ ।
— *Gītā*, 6/19

As in a breeze-free place, a candle burns, constantly, without wavering, similarly, a well-controlled mind of a *yogī*, who is always practising spiritual disciplines and practices, can surely meditate on his own true form — the individual soul which is non-dual to the supreme — the absolute existence-consciousness-bliss.

But this is not so easy to accomplish because the mind is very restless. Arjuna accepts this fact and says to Lord Kṛṣṇa —

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cañcalam hi manaḥ kṛṣṇa pramāthī balavaddṛḍham ।
— Gītā, 7/34

O! Kṛṣṇa, It is sure that our minds are very flickery, wavery, strong, firm and destructive.

Lord Kṛṣṇa replies —

abhyāsena tu kaunteya vairāgyena ca gṛhyate ।
— Gītā, 6/35

By long-term regular practice and renunciation (desirelessness), you can control your mind and make it meditate.

Maharṣi Patañjali also says the same thing —

abhyāsavairāgyābhyām tannirodhaḥ । — *YS, 1/12*

By practice and renunciation, mind can be controlled.

While meditating, one should remain conscious of the following facts:

1. One should free the mind of trash, still the thought waves and try to end the infatuation of the mind in order to still it.
2. One should have faith and unmoving confidence.
3. One should have devotion, perseverance and full control over the senses.

Lord Kṛṣṇa says this about *dhyāna* —

śraddhāvān labhate jñānam tatparaḥ saṁyatendriyaḥ ।
— Gītā, 4/39

A *yogī* with well-tamed senses, exclusive devotion and absolute faith attains absolute knowledge.

The Yoga expert Maharśi Patañjali also states —

sa tu dīrghakāla nairantarya satkārā sevito dṛḍha-bhūmiḥ ।
— YS, 1/14

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Practice becomes perfect, if done for a long term, regularly and with exclusive devotion.

4. One should practise daily and continuously.
5. One should stick to one time, one place, one seating posture, one deity, one *mantra*, one *guru* and one method.
6. One should meditate only after practising *prāṇāyāma*.
7. Do not start meditating as soon as you sit down. Sit calmly for, at least, five minutes. Expecting quick success, don't adopt short-cut ways but, patiently, wait for the natural result of your efforts. To keep thinking about the experiences that might occur in the process or talking about them with others is not just useless but also an obstacle in further progress.
8. For success in meditation, lead a pure and sacred life. One should be careful not to sin by action, words or thought.
9. *Yama, niyama, yuktāhāra* and patience are the bases, i.e., strong foundations of meditation.

Following are the possible obstacles in meditation and the process of removing them is given below:

(a) ***Sleep and laziness*** — Eat less, keep the spine straight, increase the duration of *prāṇāyāma*. It is also good to have a stroll after food.

(b) ***Overwork and tension*** — Avoid unnecessary work, share work with others, work regularly and in a planned manner and leave some things, to be worked out by God.

(c) ***Misuse of time, things, people, etc.*** — Remain careful, use everything with care and caution.

(d) ***Too much indulgence in pleasures*** — Reflect on the uselessness of pleasures and try to become detached from them.

(e) ***Bad company and greed*** — Best, if avoided.

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(f) ***Basic passions*** — Acting passionless and with discrimination.

(g) ***Tension*** — Practise relaxation *āsanas*, have good thoughts, help others without any wish, meditate for a fixed period, daily, at the same time, worship the Lord and visit temples.

(h) ***Criticising others and fault-finding*** — Be forgiving and be patient with others, try to remain silent and ignore faults in others.

(i) ***Unhealthy body*** — Practise *āsanas*, *prāṇāyāma* and *ṣaṭkarmas*.

(j) ***Obstacles and lack of progress*** — Have patience and balance of mind.

(k) Some other obstacles are tossing of mind (*vikṣepa*), rising of latent desires, lack of celibacy, spiritual pride, diseases. For these to be overridden intensive *japa-yoga*, *prārthanā*, *trāṭaka* are essential. You have to destroy desires through dispassion, discrimination and study of spiritual books. Shun the company of worldly things. Practise celibacy. Give up pride and utilize all necessary means to eradicate diseases, that have come up due to past birth's actions.

(l) The greatest obstacle in meditation is when the aspirant tastes the bliss of the lower stages of *samādhi* (contemplation) and thinks that he has attained liberation. For this, self-analysis and introspection are necessary, as this will save from such a blunder.

Following are some methods of entering into meditation which have been presented, here, keeping in mind the preliminary aspirants as well as the highest level of aspirants, i.e., adepts.

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(DAINANDINĪ DHYĀNA (CONCENTRATION ON DAILY ROUTINE)

At night, before going to sleep, sit in any meditative pose and, then, close the eyes and concentrate on the *cidākāśa*. Then, bring to mind all the major and important events of the day, right from the time of waking up to getting into bed. Also review your actions. Take a pledge not to repeat your mistakes and to perform right actions, even better, in the future. For example, one should take a vow not to be angry, greedy, infatuated, jealous, false, deceptive, etc. Also, pledge to say sorry to others for wrongs, done to them, and try to rectify, wrongs done by you. If necessary, try to remain in silence for some time for atoning all your mistakes. This is repentation. Concentrate on good actions and be determined to remove your faults like anger, greed, etc.

Then, in the morning, after having a bath for practising the daily Yoga routine, sit in some meditative pose and write down the schedule for the day in a copy, mentally. Concentrate on the order, in which the various tasks are to be done and fix a time for each. Repeat the vows taken in the previous night. During the day, perform the tasks in the decided order and in a proper manner.

You shall be very much surprised to see that in a few days you shall be able to succeed in every task undertaken and your daily routine shall be tension-free, calm and peaceful. When this happens your mind shall be better prepared for meditation.

VICĀRA DHYĀNA (CONCENTRATION ON THE THOUGHTS)

We have dealt with this topic in the previous chapter under the heading *antarmauna*. This is the second step in the process of entering into meditation. The only difference is now you are not imagining but you are only a witness of all that comes in front of you during the practice.

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MANTRA DHYĀNA (SYLABLE MEDITATION

This topic, too, has been covered in the ninth chapter under the topics *japa-yoga* and *ajapā-japa*. This is the third step in the process of meditation. The only difference is now you will not be chanting even mentally but visualizing as a witness the *mantra*'s subtle form and meditating on its resonance.

ŚVĀSA DHYĀNA (CONCENTRATION ON BREATHING)

After the first three steps, i.e., concentration on daily routine, concentration on thoughts and *mantra yoga*, try to concentrate on the breathing. Close the eyes and let the breathing be, deep. Do not stress too much. Peacefully, concentrate on the exhalation and inhalation. Remain still like a witness. Remain conscious of the pace and volume of breathing. Concentrate on the nostril, being used for breathing — the right, left or both, i.e., *iḍā*, *piṅgalā* or *suṣumnā*. After a few days of practice, try to notice how the breath is going in and coming out of the nostrils — from the centre of the nostril, from its lower part, upper part, right side or the left side. From the pace of breathing, one shall have to know which element — earth, water, fire, air or ether — is being transmitted. The following Table shall help in deciding this.

Table 1

Breathing speed	*Element*	*Taste*	*Reach of the breath*	*Time taken*	*Sense affected*	*Body affected*	*Bīja mantra*
Middle	Earth	Pungent	12 finger breadths	20 secs	Smell	Anal opening	Laṁ
Lower	Water	Sweet	16	16	Taste	Sex organs	Vaṁ
Upper	Fire	Bitter	4	12	Sight	Feet & Navel	Raṁ
Side	Air	Sour	8	8	Touch & Heart	Hands	Yaṁ
Spiral	Ether	Hot	26	4	Hearing	Mouth	Haṁ

Untill you have an experience of all this and you have attained control over all the methods of breathing, keep practising.

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SAHAJA DHYĀNA (NATURAL MEDITATION)

Sit in any meditative pose and close the eyes and concentrate on the breathing, as much as you can. Then, start chanting *oṁ*. For some time, practise *ajapā-japa*. Thereafter, concentrate the inner vision on the third eye and think of your natural self. In other words, concentrate on your pacific, unified, pure divine joy like form of true knowledge. Contemplate, thus — I am not the doer or a pleasure-seeker. Happiness-sorrow, jealousy-anger, gain-loss, victory-defeat, fame-ill fame, respect-disrespect, hot-cold and hunger-thirst all are the feelings of the mind. I am beyond all these. I am just a witness. I am the pure *Brahman*. I am the immortal Soul. Only, the physical body and the mind are affected by birth and death, sleep and awakened state, old age, ailments, smell, touch, beauty and words. These don't affect my true form. Hence, I am free of all boundaries of time, space and place. This is my real form.

Try to concentrate the mind on such thoughts and, then, chant the *mantra oṁ* and get up after chanting the *śānti-pāṭha*, i.e., prayer.

NĀDA DHYĀNA (MEDITATION OF SUBTLE SOUND)

Literally, *nāda* means sound or resonance. But, actually, *nāda* means the flow of consciousness. Consciousness passes through seven states before it is perceived by the senses.

The ***first state*** is the formless, pure *Brahman*, which is the Divine Consciousness — the basis of the other six states of *nāda*.

The ***second state*** is *oṁ* which has three sub-forms — first is *nāda*, second *Bindu* and the third *kalā*. *Nāda* is that state of *oṁ* in which the subject and the predicate are indistinguishable non-separate and are present in the dormant form of ignorance. This form is called *saguna nirākāra*, a formless one, but with attributes.

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In aggregate, i.e., in macrocosm, superior or universal consciousness, this form is called *īśvara* or God and in isolation, i.e., microcosm, individual or empirical consciousness, it is called *prājña*.

The ***third state*** is that of *bindu*. In it, subject and predicate are still indistinguishable but their form is subtle. This is called *saguṇa sākāra sūkṣma*, a subtle thing, with form and attributes. In aggregate, i.e., macrocosm, superior or universal consciousness it is called *antaryāmī* (*hiraṇyagarbha*) and in isolation, i.e., microcosm, individual or empirical consciousness, it is called *taijasa*.

The ***fourth state*** of *oṁ* is *kāla*. This is the gross form of *oṁ*. In aggregate, i.e., macrocosm, superior or universal consciousness, it is called *virāṭa* and in isolation, i.e., microcosm, individual or empirical consciousness, it is called *viśva*.

The ***fifth state*** is that of *parā*. It is the silent form of the sound. It is also the basic form, which is present in each person's heart, through which the mind knows the word, which is later expressed outside.

The ***sixth state*** is *paśyanti*. The mind "hears" it but the ears cannot. Like a dream, it is a subtle form of sound. At this stage, sound gets a mental form.

The ***seventh state*** is that of *madhyamā*, which is obvious to the mind but not to the senses. Like the period between the state of sleep and awakeness, it lies between the gross and the subtle. It can be heard by the ear as a whispering sound but is not expressed out. Thus, by this a person gains knowledge of the meaning of the sound for himself.

The ***eighth state*** is *vaikharī*. It represents the words that are spoken. This is the gross form of sound, heard by all.

Hence, the basis of *nāda-dhyāna* is the sound in the form of *Brahman* as stated in the ancient text *Māṇḍukyopaniṣad*. In the

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beginning of practice of *nāda-dhyāna*, one concentrates on the sounds of various Indian classical musical instruments. The sounds produced from these instruments, when they are played according to classical music, activate the various *cakra*s of the *kuṇḍalinī*. Hence, in the company or under the guidance of the *guru* (master), one can gain the capability of concentrating on the sound, *oṁ*, and thus, attain the union of the soul with the Supreme.

In the absence of a capable *guru* (master), one could concentrate on the music produced on a flute or a *vīṇā*. After that, one could sit in some meditative pose with closed eyes. One should shut the ears with cotton or the fingers or in some other manner so that no outside noise disturbs you. Now, one should concentrate on the inner resonance or, whatever sound, one hears within.

After practising thus, for some time, one should chant, *oṁ*, and concentrate on the resonance, produced within, due to this chanting. Slowly, the path to the state of meditation shall open up for you.

BHĀVA DHYĀNA (QUALITATIVE MEDITATION)

Sit in a meditative pose and concentrate on the *cidākāśa*. Contemplate on the virtues of your deity, Guru or some other highly revered person in your life. Concentrate on virtues like kindness, joy, forgiveness, patience, peace, fearlessness, compassion and courage. If necessary, recall some incident or event that brought out that virtue of that person and to which you were a witness. No doubt, these virtues would be completely opposite of your own weaknesses but the thoughts of such virtues would give rise to similar virtues in you.

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BHĀVĀTĪTA DHYĀNA (TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION)

Sit in some meditative pose for some moments with the eyes closed and remain completely silent. Be a witness and try to concentrate on the thoughts that are rising in your mind. Try to see if there are any thoughts and what they are about. Do not get involved with the thoughts. Just be a witness. Remain aware and repeat over and over again — *I am not a part of the play. I am a witness. I am not the thinker. I am just an witness to my thoughts. I am the pure consciousness that is oṁ. I am Brahman.*

Slowly, concentrate on the sacred, pure and divine light-like Soul in between the gap between two consecutive thoughts. Chant *oṁ*. With the sound of *oṁ*, concentrate on the breathing and the *prāṇa*, that is moving up and down, the *suṣumnā* channel. Feel the resonance of *oṁ*, all around. Feel yourself being dissipated, all around, in the form of divine light, along with the resonance of *oṁ*. Visualize the universe, present in the divine light, the earth in its place in the universe, your place on earth and your own physical body. Visualize yourself separate from all these as the omnipresent divine element that instills consciousness in everything. Keep concentrating on the sound of *oṁ*. When you have practised for some time, visualize the omnipresent divine element returning to the physical body. Concentrate on the divine consciousness in each part of the body and your breathing. Get up after *śānti-pāṭha*, the prayer.

UNMANI KRIYĀ

Sit in some meditative pose and practise five rounds of *kapālabhāti prāṇāyāma*. Perform along with the three *bandhas* and, then, do not open the eyes. But practise *ujjāyī prāṇāyāma*. Concentrate on the flow of *prāṇic* energy from the *mūlādhāra* to the *ājñā cakra* and back, even as you chant *oṁ*. Imagine that the sound *o* starts

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from the *ājñā cakra* and, as it reaches the *mūlādhara*, it culminates into *ṁ*. Repeat fifty times and, then, chant *soham*. Rest after every 16 chantings. Chant the *soham mantra* 52 times, too. Again, repeat with *oṁ*. Thereafter, sit peacefully, for some time, and experience the rise of joy and happiness within, due to the just-practised meditation. Do not fall asleep or practise for the sake of entertainment. Return to the normal state and open the eyes after *śānti-pāṭha* prayer.

PRĀṆA-VIDYĀ (SCIENCE OF VITAL ENERGY)

We have described *prāṇa* in the fourth chapter, **Science of Prāṇāyāma**. In brief, the divine life-force that enters the body along with the air we breathe in, is *prāṇa*. Several types of *prāṇāyāma* have been described for achieving control over *prāṇa* through the control of breathing. This is done for spiritual and physical gains. The highest science relating to *prāṇa* is called *prāṇa-vidyā*. By practising the process being revealed, here, one can gain the capability of using *prāṇa* for the physical and spiritual good of oneself and others, too.

One can do this practice while sitting, lying on the back or on the stomach or lying on the side. The only thing is that the spine should be straight. One should do this practice, when the right nostril is working, i.e., when the *piṅgalā* channel is active. This practice is done in two steps. In the first step, while breathing in, imagine that *prāṇic* energy is flowing from the *maṇipūra cakra* or each pore of the body towards *ājñā cakra* and accumulating there.

Then, slowly breathe out. In the second step, imagine that the accumulated *prāṇic* energy is being disseminated to all parts of the body through the various spiritual channels. Or imagine it is flowing to that part of the body where you have some pain, disease or any other part, where you want it to concentrate for special benefit. If you wish it to flow into the body of some person, use

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the thumb and the ring finger of the right hand to transfer the energy to the desired part of the body.

Procedure — Close the eyes lightly and become ready. Get into a comfortable position but with the spine straight and be still. Now harmonize the pace of the flow of *prāṇa* with the pace of breathing. Remember that the *prāṇic* energy moves in circles, anticlockwise. Imagine the *prāṇic* energy starting from the *mūlādhāra* and moving up in a semi-circle from the right to reach the *svādhiṣṭhāna*. Then, from there, it moves again in a semi-circle but from the left to the *maṇipūra cakra*. In this manner, it rises up from one *cakra* to another until it reaches the *ājñā cakra*. Then, it returns to the *mūlādhāra* from the reverse direction. This is the conscious flow of the *prāṇic* energy in wave form.

When you have become perfect in this practice, then, let the *prāṇic* energy rise, as you breathe in and, let it return, as you breathe out, normally. Also be aware of the whole process as the *prāṇic* energy rises and gets accumulated in a waveless form in the *ājñā cakra*. Repeat in your mind that both your *prāṇic* energy and your conscious energy are getting accumulated in the *ājñā cakra*.

After this, hold the breath in and perform the three *bandhas* and feel the *kuṇḍalinī* power rising to the *ājñā cakra* along with the *prāṇic* energy. Relax the *bandhas* and breathe out. Then, let the body relax. Repeat the cycle again. Imagine that you are not breathing in and out just through the nostrils but through every pore of the body. Each time you breathe in, feel the *prāṇic* energy and the *kuṇḍalinī* rising; and every time you breathe out, feel the body relaxing.

Then breathe in, deeply and slowly. Feel that the breath is spreading to each part of the body and the accumulated *prāṇic* energy in the *ājñā cakra* is being disseminated throughout the body. The *prāṇic* energy is not only flowing up and down through the *cakras* in the spine, but is reaching every cell of the body. The breathing should be in the form of *ujjāyī prāṇāyāma*.

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Further, imagine that you are breathing not through the nostrils or the body pores but through the *ājñā cakra*. With each inhalation, feel the entire body being filled with *prāṇic* energy and with each exhalation, feel the body relaxing. Feel this with a harmony between the breathing, the imagination, the inner vision, the feelings, the thoughts and the awareness of the body. Do not concentrate on just one. Feel that your body is blowing like a balloon, as all these processes go on. The body shall expand as you breathe in and relax as you breathe out. Also, there shall be dissemination of the *prāṇic* energy and relaxation of the body, respectively.

When you have mastered this practice, try to make the *prāṇic* energy flow wilfully through the various parts of the body. In the end, again, let the *prāṇic* energy disseminate with inhalation and let the body relax with exhalation. Thereafter, open the eyes. For the best use of such practices and quick progress in them, one needs the guidance of a capable *guru*. Do not try to do on your own. Otherwise there might be reverse results instead of benefits.

KUṆḌALINĪ VIDYĀ (SCIENCE OF KUṆḌALINĪ — THE DORMANT ENERGY)

This is the highest form of *dhyāna* and *sādhānā*, i.e., meditation and spiritual practices. One should try to do this practice after getting initiation from a *guru*. One can practise the following practices which are being revealed here. But as the last three practices are kept secret, they are not being revealed, here. They are revealed by the *guru*, directly, to an eligible disciple, only. The 19 practices are —

1. *Viparītakaraṇī-mudrā*, 2. *Cakrānusandhāna*, 3. *Nāda sañcālana*, 4. *Pavana sañcālana*, 5. *Śabda sañcālana*, 6. *Mahā-mudrā*, 7. *Mahā-bheda-mudrā*, 8. *Māṇḍūkī kriyā*, 9. *Tāḍana kriyā* (these practices are for mastering *pratyāhāra*), 10. *Naumukhi-mudrā*, 11 *Śakti sañcālana*, 12. *Śāmbhavī kriyā*, 13. *Amṛta-pāna*, 14. *Cakra-*

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bhedana, 15. *Suṣumnā darśana*, 16. *Prāṇāhuti*, 17. *Utthāna*, 18. *Svarūpa darśana*, 19. *Liṅga sañcālana* (these practices are for mastering *dhāraṇā*).

After these, come the three practices, through which *dhyāna* and *samādhi* are mastered.

For knowing more on the subject, please read *Kuṇḍalinī Kriyā*, *Meditation from Tantras* and other books, written by our revered Gurudeva Paramahansa Swami Satyananda Sarasvati and published by Bihar School of Yoga, Munger, Bihar, India. It is not right to practise any of these without the guidance of a properly trained expert, teacher or master on *kriyā yoga*.

IMPORTANT FACTS RELATED TO MEDITATION

Some important facts relating to meditation are as follows —

1. First of all, meditation is not anything that can be forced. Just as sleep comes, naturally, and one cannot go to sleep by one's will, similarly, meditation happens on its own. Still, one has to prepare a bed, bed cover, pillow, blanket, etc., for going to sleep. Similarly, one has to practise the above practices to prepare the mind for meditation. In fact, meditation is an experience that is beyond words just like sleep and the taste of sweets. It can be known only through experience.
2. Meditation has been described as the thoughtless state of mind, self-analysis, conscious analysis of the self, becoming still in the state of mindlessness and so on. But, actually, meditation cannot be described in words.
3. Until one has not become detached from the means of comfort in the material world one cannot dive within and meditate.
4. Actually, the mind is both a boon and a bane for humans. It is through the mind that one can become free of all bonds or get caught in the mire of this world. Hence, one has to practise meditation in order to make the mind devoted to achieve the

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goal of spiritual emancipation. The ancient texts state — *mana eva kāraṇam bandhamokṣayoḥ* ।

Mind is the root cause of Bondage and liberation, both.

5. Meditation is a very practical activity. There is no need for any laboratory for it. The body itself is a laboratory in which the mind and the senses are the devices. The science of turning the mind (which always tends to wander outwards) inwards and transcending it above everything can be called as meditation.
6. Through meditation only the *sattva*, i.e., alpha waves, the most pure among, the four waves produced by the brain (alpha, beta, theta and delta, i.e., *sattva*, *rajaḥ*, *tamaḥ* and *miśra*), are generated. As a result, one feels divine joy and peace.
7. The aim of meditation is to concentrate the restless mind.

BENEFITS OF MEDITATION

The final aim of meditation might or might not be realization of the Soul but the following benefits surely accrue to a practitioner of meditation:

(a) One gains a tension-free mind. The mind becomes still and the body relaxed and peaceful.

(b) The mind is not troubled by worldly tensions because the mind, the senses and the experiences, attained through them with the divine powers, are under control of the *yogī*.

(c) *Yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam* — i.e., according to this verse, through meditation and Yoga, one gains the capability of performing action with wisdom as well as concentration.

(d) All the chemical processes and organs of the body, start working flawlessly.

(e) Problems like high blood pressure, heart ailments, mental disturbance, tension, sleeplessness, nervous disorders are cured.

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(f) One gains eternal joy and peace having crossed over the stages of awakeness, dream and *suṣupti*, deep sleep and enters into the state of *turīya*, i.e., transcendental bliss.

(g) Total consciousness is awakened through meditation and, as a result, one is able to gain more benefits by working in a balanced, organized, patient and careful manner.

(h) One can find solutions to problems easily through meditation. One is able to control all passions, including anger.

(i) The greatest achievement is that one is able to attain control over the sexual desire due to which several problems related to the mind and body are remedied.

(j) There is a rise of uninfatuation and desirelessness due to which one is able to control one's tendency to overeat, anxiety, prejudice, etc.

(k) In brief, it can be said that, through meditation, there is gain of purity, happiness, peace, devotion, satisfaction, faith, humility, totality, divinity, feeling of responsibility, concentration in work, activeness, enthusiasm, wisdom, intelligence, physical power and, finally, realization of the soul.

NOTICE

We have not included another chapter for explaining, *samādhi*, and its various stages and benefits. Hence, one might wonder how this could be Yoga in its totality? Actually, *samādhi* is a stage which manifests on its own. We have mentioned about it in different ways at several places. *Samādhi* is but the actual realization of the divine. When meditation itself is so hard to explain, then, how can an even more subtle stage, *samādhi*, be described through words? It is best for the aspirants to practise regularly, rigorously and patiently with total devotion all spiritual disciplines under capable guidance and experience it by themselves.

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Part-3

Science of Subtle Elements (Tattva Vijñāna)

FOR purification of the body and the mind through the practices, mentioned earlier, and for proper performance of the practices and for attaining success in them, it is necessary for the aspirant to have *tattva- jñāna* or knowledge of the elements. Otherwise, Yoga could lead to physical and mental problems. If one has the knowledge of elements, then, one could understand the side effects of Yoga and work for their elimination. Hence, this part of the book is very significant from the physical and psychical points of view.

This part has three chapters — (13) Science of Psychic Channels (Nāḍī Vijñāna); (14) Science of Psychic Centres (Cakra Vijñāna); and (15) Science of Dormant Energy (Kuṇḍalinī Vijñāna).

These three chapters are based on the essence, derived from various texts like *Yoga-kuṇḍalinyopaniṣad*, *Jābāladarśanopaniṣad*, *Yoga-cūḍāmaṇyopaniṣad*, *Yogaśikhopaniṣad*, *Śāṇḍilyopaniṣad*, *Yogī Yājñavalkya-Saṁhitā*, the texts, *Ṣaṭ-Cakranirūpaṇaṁ* and *Pādukā Pañcakam* by Ācārya Śaṅkara, the text *Gorakṣāṣṭakam* by Gorakhnāth and the personal experiences of the great *yogī* of the modern times, revered Gurudeva Paramahansa Swami Satyananda Sarasvatiji and the greatest psychologist and *yogī* of the world, Hiroshi Motoyama of Japan.

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Every object has two forms. One is gross or the expressed and the other is subtle or the unexpressed. Similarly, the *nāḍīs*, *cakra*s and *kuṇḍalinī* have a gross form, constituting the nerves, glands and the respective energy and the subtle form, that is invisible and spiritual. Views related to these are being presented, here, on the basis of both facts and experiences. We shall also briefly focus not only on the *nāḍīs*, *cakra*s and the *kuṇḍalinī* but also on the methods of their activation.

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Science of Psychic Channels (Nāḍī Vijñāna)

THE link between the physical body, subtle body and the causal body is the *prāṇa*. The main centres of this *prāṇic* energy in each body are called *cakra*s. And *nāḍī*s are the channels through which the energy from these centres is disseminated. *Nāḍī* is a means for transfer of *prāṇa* from the *cakra*s of the subtle body to the physical and causal bodies. In the physical body, there are tissue vessels, in the subtle body, there are subtle channels and, in the causal body, the channels are there in the form of *ojas* (spiritual energy). Although different texts give different numbers of *nāḍī*s, the highest number is 72, 72, 10, 108. Among them, 3, 40, 000 are important and among these, 72,000 are main. Still, among these 101, then 36 and among them 18 are most important. Among all *nāḍī*s, three — *suṣumnā*, *iḍā* and *piṅgalā* — are the basic channels. After enlightenment, all *nāḍī*s appear like channels of divine light.

There are two views regarding the origin of *nāḍī*s — one is the *kanda sthāna* and the other the navel.

The text, *Jābāladarśanopaniṣad*, states that this centre is actually of nine finger breadths above the *mūlādhāra* and it is the navel region. But the text *Yogi Yājñavalkya-Saṁhitā*, which mentions only 14 *nāḍī*s, states —

kandasthānam manuṣyāṇām deha madhye navāṅgulam ।
caturaṅgulamutsedha āyāmam ca tathā vidham ॥

aṇḍākṛtivadākāram bhūṣitam cā śrī gādādibhiḥ ।

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catuṣpādam ca hṛnmadhyam dvijānām tunda-madhyamam ॥ — *YYS*, 4/16-17

That means, the *kanda sthāna* or the centre of *nāḍī*s, is nine finger breadths, above the navel in biped beings, like the humans and, above the heart, in quadrupeds. It is shaped like an egg and is four finger in breadth, width and height. It is from this centre that the *nāḍī*s rise above and extend below. (See Table 13.1 on next page)

The text *Yogaśikhopaniṣad* states that the navel encircled by the *vilamba nāḍī* as the *nābhi cakra*, which it states is egg-shaped and, from here, the *nāḍī*s originate.

The table gives the names of the main *nāḍī*s and their origin. These *nāḍī*s carry *prāṇa* which is nothing but energy in subtle form. The *nāḍī*s and their effect can be controlled through physical and mental means. A perfect harmony can be maintained among the *nāḍī*s through *āsanas*, *prāṇāyāma*, *pratyāhāra*, *dhāraṇā* and *dhyāna*, thus, attaining a disease-free physique and spiritual emancipation.

The main *nāḍī*s are being dealt with, in detail, here.

SUṢUMNĀ

This is also called *brahma-nāḍī* and *vaiṣṇavī-nāḍī*. There is difference of opinion regarding its point of origin. The text, *Śāṇḍilyopaniṣad*, states that it originates from the *mūlādhāra*, while the texts, *Chāndogyopaniṣad* and *Ṣaṭ-Cakranirūpaṇam*, consider the point of its origin to be the heart and the *kanda sthāna*, respectively. But most of the Vedic texts and the texts of Yoga consider the *mūlādhāra* to be its origin. All texts consider that it terminates in the *brahmarandhra* on top of the head. The omnipresent *prāṇa* and the *kuṇḍalinī śakti* having reached the *brahmarandhra* flow back to the *mūlādhāra* through *suṣumnā* and,

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Table 13.1: Location of the different Nāḍīs

Name of Scriptures → / *Name of Nāḍī* ↓	*Jābāladarśa-nopaniṣad and Yogī Yājñavalkya-Saṁhitā*	*Yogacūḍā-maṇyo-paniṣad*	*Yogaśikopa-niṣad*	*Śāṇdilyopa-niṣad*	*Gorakṣā-ṣṭakam*	*Ṣaṭ-Cakra-nirūpaṇam*	*Siddhasiddhānta Paddhatiḥ*
1. *Suṣumnā*	From the *kanda sthāna* up to the front part of the head	Middle of the spine	From the middle (it has been called *brahma-nāḍī*)	From *mūlādhārā* up to *brahmaran-dhra*	Middle	From *kanda sthāna* up to the front	From the upper palate up to the *brahmrandhra*
2. *Iḍā*	From the left of *suṣumnā*, up to the left nostril	Left side	From the navel on to the left side of the *suṣumnā*, up to the end of *vilamba*	From the left of *suṣumnā* up to the left nostril	Left	Left	Left nostril
3. *Piṅgalā*	From the right of *suṣumnā* up to the right nostril	Right side	From the navel on the right side of *suṣumnā*, up to the end of *vilamba*	From the right of *suṣumnā* up to the right nostril	Right	Right	Right nostril
4. *Gāndhārī*	From the back of *iḍā*, up to the corner of the left eye	Left eye	From the navel up to the left eye	From the back of *iḍā* up to the left eye	Left eye	—	Left ear

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Name of Scriptures → / Name of Nāḍī ↓	*Jābāladarśa-nopaniṣad and yogi yājñavalkya Saṁhita*	*Yogacūd-amaṇy upaniṣad*	*Yogaśikh opaniṣad*	*Śāndilyo paniṣad*	*Gorakṣā ṣṭakam*	*Ṣatcakra nirūpaṇam*	*Siddhasiddhānta Paddhatiḥ*
5. *Hastijihvā*	From the back of *iḍā*, up to the corner of the right eye	Right eye	From the navel up to the right eye	From the back of *iḍā* up to the right eye	Right eye	—	Right ear
6. *Pūṣā*	From the back of *piṅgalā*, up to the end of the corner of the right eye	Right ear	From the navel up to the right ear	From the back of *piṅgalā* up to the right eye	Right ear	—	Right eye
7. *Yaśasvinī*	From the back of *piṅgalā*, till the end of the right big toe	Left ear	—	From the right ear up to the end of the left big toe	Left ear	—	Left eye
8. *Alambuṣā*	Through the *kanda sthāna* and from the anal opening upwards	Mouth	From the navel up to the left ear	Above the anal opening and downwards	Mouth	—	—
9. *Kuhū*	From sex organs Goes downwards and, then, rises to the tip of the right nostril	Sex organs	From the sex organs up to the right nostril end	From the sex organs up to the end of the right nostril	Sex organs	—	Anal opening

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10. *Śaṅkhinī*	Till the left ear	*Mūlādhārā*	Till the taste sense in the throat	Till the right ear	Anal opening	Below the sahasrāra	Sex organs
11. *Sarasvatī*	Till the tongue	—	Till the tongue tip	Tongue tip	Corner of the mouth	—	Corner of the mouth
12. *Vāruṇī*	All around the *kuṇḍalinī*	—	Till the anal opening	All around the *kuṇḍalinī*	—	—	—
13. *Payasvinī*	Till the right ear	—	—	Till the left ear	—	—	—
14. *Viśvodarī*	Middle of the *kanda*	—	*Caturvidha annarasa pravāhikā*	—	—	—	—
15. *Śūrā*	—	—	Third Eye	—	—	—	—
16. *Saumyā*	—	—	—	Tip of the right big toe	—	—	—
17. *Vajrā*	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
18. *Citriṇī*	—	—	*Citra vīrya pravāhikā*	—	—	—	—
19. Others	Named as *jihvā* rises up	—	Named *rākā* — Increases phlegm and thirst	—	—	—	—

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thereafter, the energy is disseminated through-out the body. As a result, the body and the senses become active and *vīrya* (semen) is formed. The *vīrya* is converted into *ojas* (the spiritual energy) through the practice of Yoga and this *ojas*, energy, helps in the rising of *kuṇḍalinī śakti* and its merging into the *sahasrāra*. This results in spiritual emancipation. Hence, an aspirant should realize the presence of this *nāḍī*. This *nāḍī* affects all body systems too.

IḌĀ AND PIṄGALĀ

Both these *nāḍī*s rise from the *mūlādhāra* and move up entwining around the *suṣumnā*, forming a link with each *cakra* on its way to the *ājñā cakra*, where both of them merge with the *suṣumnā*. Both these are part of the sensory and motor nervous systems. The *iḍā* rises from the left side, while the *piṅgalā* rises from the right. Although they are said to entwine around the *suṣumnā*, as they rise, the texts state that they rise straight like two tubules. The *prāṇic* energy is supposed to rise through them in an entwining manner. The basic features of these three main *nāḍī*s are being given here in Table 13.2.

Table 13.2

Sl. no.	*Trait*	*Iḍā*	*Piṅgalā*	*Suṣumnā*
1.	Breathing	left nostril	right nostril	both equally
2.	Temperature	cold	hot	normal
3.	Sex	feminine	masculine	neuter
4.	Effect	mental	physical	spiritual
5.	Colour	blue	red	shining white
6.	Metal	silver	gold	diamond (*vajra*)
7.	Energy	negative	positive	neutral
8.	Nerve	sensory	motor	both
9.	River	Gaṅgā	Yamunā	Sarasvatī
10.	Planet	Moon	Sun	both
11.	Duration	8 hrs	8 hrs	8 hrs

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The text, *svara-yoga*, describes these *nāḍīs*, in detail. All yogic practices are meant to create a balance between the *iḍā* and *piṅgalā* in order to activate the *suṣumnā*. Naturally, in the course of breathing *iḍā* and *piṅgalā* remain active for 12 hours, each. Sometimes, the *suṣumnā*, too, remains active for a short duration. To bring about a change in this natural state is *sādhanā*, i.e., spiritual practice. When the *iḍā nāḍī* is active, the *jñāna-śaktī* or power of thinking is active. There could be flow of thoughts, concentration in one thought or wavering mind, etc. When the *piṅgalā* is active, then, *kriyā-śaktī* or *prāṇic* energy is active. Thus, there is functioning of body systems like digestion, extrovertness, etc. When the *suṣumnā* is active, then, the mind turns inwards and one progresses, spiritually.

GĀNDHĀRĪ

This *nāḍī* is said to be present in the end of the left eye. But the text *Siddhasiddhāntapaddhatiḥ* states that it is present in the end of the left ear. Just as *iḍā* and *piṅgalā* affect the physical and mental processes, similarly, the *gāndhārī nāḍī* affect the excretory system. If it is in a state of balance, then, the excretory system functions well.

HASTIJIHVĀ

There are three views regarding the place where it ends — the left big toe, the right eye and the right ear. It is in the left side of the body. The *gāndhārī nāḍī* works with *pūṣā nāḍī*, whereas *hastijihvā* works *in tandem* with *yaśasvinī nāḍī*. All these four *nāḍīs* affect the excretory system. If they are in a state of balance, then, this system functions well.

YAŚASVINĪ

Like *hastijihvā*, this *nāḍī*, too, affects the excretory system but it is

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in the right side of the body.

ALAMBUṢĀ

This is a very important *nāḍī*. All feelings of the senses are conveyed to *suṣumnā* through it and, then, through *suṣumnā*, to the brain. It affects the mind and the metabolic system. Hence, it is very important in Yoga practices.

KUHŪ

This *nāḍī* affects the liver. Balanced working of this *nāḍī* keeps well the functioning of the stomach and the blood circulation.

ŚAṄKHINĪ

Its centre is in the throat but it flows up to the anus, sex organs, *mūlādhārā* and the ears. It affects the kidneys. Its main functions are purification of the blood and urinary excretion.

SARASVATĪ

This *nāḍī* ends in the mouth. Hence it directly affects the spleen. It controls the temperature in the stomach.

VĀRUṆĪ

This *nāḍī* controls the excretion by means of stools. Some believe that it controls all body activities through the blood circulation.

PAYASVINĪ

It is directly linked to the bile storehouse — the gall bladder. It controls the level of bile in the body and affects the digestion.

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ŚŪRĀ

Some believe that its centre is the Third Eye and it affects *jñāna* and *kriyā-śakti*. But through direct experience it can be said that it affects the digestive system. If it remains active, one does not suffer from diabetes.

VIŚVODARĪ

The name suggests that it affects the intestines. It controls the metabolism and catabolism.

OTHERS

The *vajrā* and *citrinī nāḍīs* affect the production of semen in men and egg in women. The *rākā nāḍī* controls thirst and phlegm. The *jihvā nāḍī* affects the taste buds and makes one aware of the various tastes.

Here, we have discussed the effect of the various *nāḍīs* on the physical body. But one also needs to dwell on their spiritual effect. These *nāḍīs* also control the *jñāna-śakti* (thought process) and *prāṇa-śaskti* (vital energy) and *ojas* (spiritual energy). All these *nāḍīs* or channels are subtle and they link the physical and the subtle bodies. The aspirant could activate them through *nāḍī śodhana prāṇāyāma* and, thus, purify both the physical and subtle bodies to make quick spiritual progress.

While doing *nāḍī śodhana prāṇāyāma*, what you have to do is just concentrate on that particular *nāḍī* which you want to activate. Visualize mentally from its starting point up to its ending point. Also, during *āsanas*, remember the drift centres of the *nāḍī* and choose an appropriate *āsana*, which affects that particular centre or region where the *nāḍī* begins or ends. Especially, during *dhāraṇā* and *dhyāna* practices, concentrate your mind on these *nāḍīs*, locations and functions to activate them.

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14

Science of Psychic Centres (Cakra Vijñāna)

THE concept of *kuṇḍalinī* power is based on the science of *cakra*s. The literary meaning of the word *cakra* is a wheel or discus. But in Yoga a *cakra* denotes a centre of *prāṇic* energy. The number of such centres in the human body are infinite but, in the view of spiritual practices and liberation, there are seven *cakra*s.

Before going into the science of *cakra*s, one needs to dwell on the different forms of *prāṇa*, which is nothing but a subtle form of the air, breathed in. This is necessary as the awakening and evolution of the *cakra*s and, thereby, the awakening and evolution of the *kuṇḍalinī* depends on the *prāṇa*.

Table 14.1 : Location

S. No.	Name	*Jābāladarśanopaniṣad*	*Yogacūḍāmaṇ-yupaniṣad*	*Ṣat-Cakrani-rūpaṇam and Pādukāpañcakam*
1.	*Prāṇa*	Active in nose, mouth, navel, heart	Heart	Heart
2.	*Apāna*	Large intestine, sex organs, stomach, thigh, buttocks	*Mūlādhārā*	Sex organs and anal opening
3.	*Vyāna*	Ears, from eyes up to the heels	Whole body	Whole body, the heels
4.	*Samāna*	Whole body	Navel	Navel
5.	*Udāna*	Hands and feet	Chest	Throat
6.	*Nāga*	Skin and bones	—	—
7.	*Kūrma*	Skin and bones	—	—
8.	*Kṛkara*	Skin and bones	—	—
9.	*Devadatta*	Skin and bones	—	—
10.	*Dhanañjaya*	Skin and bones	—	—

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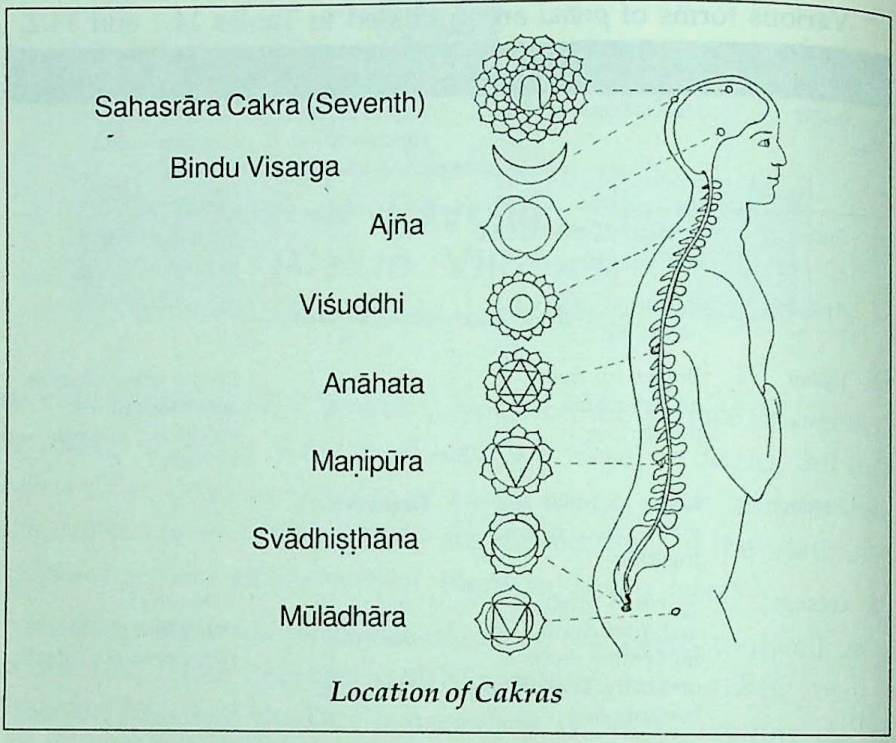
Various forms of *prāṇa* are discussed in Tables 14.1 and 14.2.

Table 14.2 : Work

S. No.	Name	Jābāladarśanopaniṣad	Yogacūḍāmaṇ-yupaniṣad	Ṣaṭ-Cakrani-rūpaṇam and Pādukā-pañcakam
1.	*Prāṇa*	Inhalation, exhalation and coughing	— —	Inhalation and exhalation
2.	*Apāna*	Excretion of stool, urine, etc.	—	Excretion
3.	*Vyāna*	Breaks up food and elements preventing	—	Proper dissemination and break up of essential elements of body
4.	*Samāna*	Keeps all limbs and joints intact, organs together	Digestive system	—
5.	*Udāna*	Spiritual progress and after death movement from one body to another towards hell	—	*Adhogati*, i.e., doing bad deeds and movement after death.
6.	*Nāga*	Hiccups	Spitting	—
7.	*Kūrma*	Blinking	Blinking	—
8.	*Kṛkara*	Hunger	Sneezing	—
9.	*Devadatta*	Sleep	Yawning	—
10.	*Dhanañjaya*	Shining (*caunghana*, i.e., reflex of closing eyes when there is bright light)	Decay of the body after death	—

From these Tables 14.1 and 14.2, the location of the various forms of *prāṇa* and their functioning is very much clear. One can balance and control these forms of *prāṇa* through practice of *āsanas*, *prāṇāyāma*, *mudrā*, *bandha*, *pratyāhāra*, *dhāraṇā* and *dhyāna*. When this has been done one can make them flow as one wishes and, then, concentrating on the *cakras*, one can make the *kuṇḍalinī* rise. Now, we focus on the *cakras*. The *cakras* are directly linked to the secret or unobvious brain centres, which generally

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Location of Cakras

remain dormant or unactivated in all humans beings. Table 14.3 gives general information, in this regard.

MŪLĀDHĀRA CAKRA

As the name suggests this *cakra* is the basis of our existence because the *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* remains dormant, here. As this is the basis of all *cakras*, it is called *mūlādhāra*, i.e., the main base. In Sāṅkhya and Yoga philosophy, it is called *mūla prakṛti* (basic nature) and in the Vedānta, it is called *māyā* or *mūlavidyā* (worldly delusion or universal ignorance). Hence, the basis of this world is *mūlādhāra cakra*.

According to the Tantra texts, as it is the base of *kuṇḍalinī-śakti*, or the ego, it is called the *mūlādhāra*. *Kuṇḍalinī* is believed to lie in *mūlādhāra* like a recumbent snake, coiled three and a half times. The tail is in the snake's mouth. When even in this state of

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Table 14.3

Sl. No.	Subject	Mūlādhāra	Svādhiṣṭhāna	Maṇipūra	Anāhata	Viśuddhi	Ājñā	Sahasrāra
1.	Location	Perinium	Sex Organs	Behind the Navel	Behind the heart	Behind the throat	Third eye	Brain
2.	Lotus petals	4	6	10	12	16	2	1000 or infinite
3.	Colour of petals	Blood-Red	Vermilion	Blue.	Rising sun	Smoky	White	Colourless
4.	Alphabets related to the petals	Vaṁ Śaṁ Ṣaṁ Saṁ	Baṁ Bhaṁ Maṁ Yaṁ Raṁ Laṁ	Ḍaṁ Ḍhaṁ Ṇaṁ Taṁ Thaṁ Daṁ Dhaṁ Naṁ Paṁ Phaṁ	Kaṁ Khaṁ Gaṁ Ghaṁ Ṇaṁ Caṁ Chaṁ Jaṁ Jhaṁ Ñaṁ Ṭaṁ Ṭhaṁ	Aṁ Āṁ Iṁ Īṁ Uṁ Ūṁ Ṛṁ Ṝṁ Ḷṁ Ḹṁ Aiṁ Āiṁ Oṁ Auṁ Aṁ Aḥ	Ham Kṣam	All the afore mentioned alphabets
5.	Element	Earth	Water	Fire	Air	Ether	*Mahat*, i.e., mind, ego and intellect	Beyond all elements

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Sl. No.	Subject	Mūlādhāra	Svādhiṣṭhāna	Maṇipūra	Anāhata	Viśuddhi	Ājñā	Sahasrāra
6.	Bīja	Laṁ	Vaṁ	Raṁ	Yaṁ	Haṁ	Kṣaṁ or *oṁ*	Visarga or *oṁ*
7.	Vehicle of *bīja*	Āirāvatī 7-trunked white elephant	Crocodile	Rām	Deer	Elephant, single trunked	*Nāda*. The self	Bindu
8.	God	Brahma, Creator	Viṣṇu Operator	Vṛddha Rudra Destroyer	Īśāna Rudra Ruler	Pañcava-ktra Peace giver	Liṅga, Giver of wisdom and knowledge	Parabraḥma The supreme self.
9.	Goddess	Ḍākinī Sāvitrī	Rākinī Sarasvatī	Lākinī Lakṣmī	Kākinī Kālī	Sākinī —	Hākinī —	Śakti —
10.	Spiritual world i.e., *loka*	Bhūḥ	Bhūvaḥ	Svaḥ	Mahaḥ	Janaḥ	Tapaḥ	Satyaṁ
11.	Trait or attribute *guṇas*	Smell	Taste	Beauty	Touch	Sound	All	Beyond all
12.	*Yantra* (symbolic form)	Square	Half moon	Triangle	Hexagon	Round	Oval,	Full moon/ shapeless
13.	Colour of *yantra*	Yellow	Silver white	Red	Smoky	White	Brown	Beyond all
14.	Related physical sense-organ	Smell	Taste	Sight	Touch	Hearing	All	Beyond sense

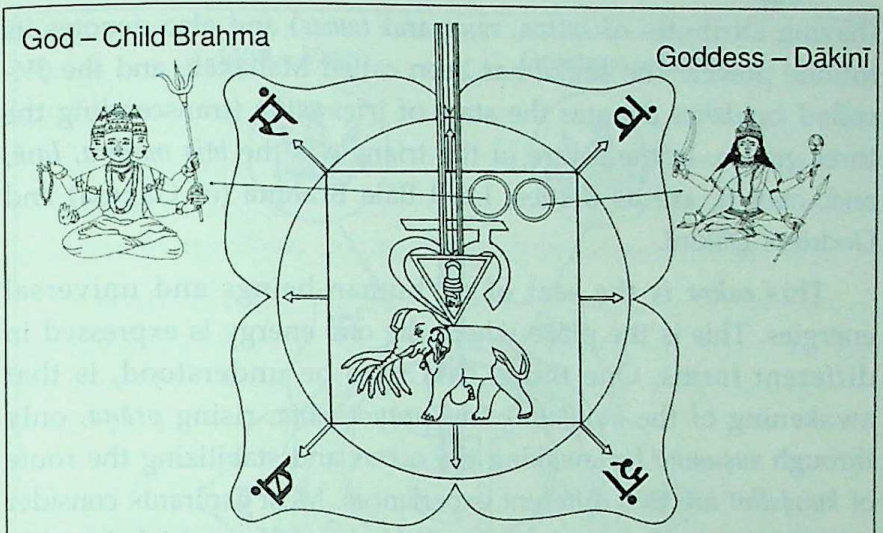
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15.	Related body part	Anal opening	Sex organs	Feet	Hands	Mouth	All	Beyond body
16.	Nature	Basis of life	Peace and comfort	Prosperity	*Nāda* or subtle sound	*Amṛta* or elixir	Control over everything	*Mokṣa* or spiritual emancipation
17.	*Dhātu*	Bones	Fat	Flesh	Blood	Skin	Bone	*Vīrya* (semen)
18.	*Prāṇa*, the vital force	*Apāna*	*Vyāna*	*Samāna*	*Prāṇa*	*Udāna*	All	Beyond *prāṇa*
19.	*Kośa* (Sheath)	*Annamaya*, physical body	*Prāṇamaya*, subtle vital body	*Prāṇamaya*, subtle vital body	*Manomaya* Mental body	*Vijñānamaya* Intellectual body	*Vijñāna-maya*	*Ānandamaya Blissful* (causal)
20.	*Yoni*	Tripura	—	—	Triangle	—	Triangle	—
21.	*Liṅga*	Dhūmra	—	—	Bāṇa	—	Itararkya	—
22.	*Granthi* (gland)	Brahmā, Creator	—	—	Viṣṇu, operator	—	Rudra, destroyer	Jyotirmaya, wisdom
23.	Region	Anal region	Sex organs	Navel	Heart	Throat	Third Eye	Brain
24.	Experience	Inverted triangle and a snake coiled three and a half times	Total blackout and fainting	Radiant yellow coloured lotus	Blue lotus and a peaceful lake or a lamp in a cave	Coolness and Amṛta Bindu	*Unmani* and an oval golden light	Divine light and lotus with infinite petals

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Sl. No.	Subject	*Mūlādhāra*	*Svādhiṣṭhāna*	*Maṇipūra*	*Anāhata*	*Viśuddhi*	*Ājñā*	*Sahasrāra*
25.	Result of activation	Knowledge, disease free physique, flyable light body, victory over *kuṇḍalinī*	Capacity to write poetry, Yoga, riddance from fear of water, knowledge of subtle body	Prosperity through secret means, disease-free body, riddance from fear of fire, complete knowledge of both physical subtle body	Gain of *prāṇa vidyā*, Divine love, eloquence, control over senses	Agelessness and deathlessness, knowledge of Vedas, power to look into the past and future, no hunger, knowledge of causal body sciences	Power to enter one-self into another physical form, complete knowledge, omniscience, knowledge of all secret	*Samādhi*, total activation of *kuṇḍalinī* and *mokṣā*, i.e., liberation

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Mūlādhāra Cakra

the *kuṇḍalinī*, a person breathes and does so much work, then, imagine what can he not achieve, if this energy is fully awakened! Surely, he can attain perfection by awakening it. Hence, this *cakra* is of utmost importance in the *kuṇḍalinī* Yoga.

The *mūlādhāra cakra* is described as having four blood coloured petals inside which is a square yellow *yantra*, i.e., a resemblance, representing earth element. In eight directions the *yantra* is guarded by eight golden tridents or spears. The spear, that guards the base, represents earth, while the other seven represent the seven great mountains, which are thrusting the earth on the ocean, thereby, not letting earth to tumble or drown. This *yantra* is situated on an elephant with seven trunks. An elephant is a symbol of power and stability, while the seven trunks denote the seven metals or the seven main constituents of the body.

In the centre of this *yantra* is an red inverted coloured triangle and in the middle of this triangle is a smoke-coloured *śivaliṅga*. Coiled around this *śivaliṅga*, 3½ times is the snake, which represents the ego or the *kuṇḍalinī*. The triangle represents *prakṛti*, i.e., nature which is the cause of ego and which is *triguṇātmaka*

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(having attributes of *sattva, rajas* and *tamas*) and also denotes its infinite power. The snake has been called Mahākālī, and the 3½-coiled *kuṇḍalinī* denotes the state of *triguṇātīta* (transcending the three *guṇas*). In the centre of the triangle is the *bīja mantra, laṁ*, and, over it, are its deities, Lord Bāla Brahma (or Gaṇeśa) and Goddess Ḍākinī.

This *cakra* is the seat of all human beings and universal energies. This is the place where the one energy is expressed in different forms. One thing, that is to be understood, is that awakening of the *kuṇḍalinī* and *prāṇotthāna*, rising *prāṇa*, only through *suṣumnā* for awaking the *cakra*s and stabilizing the route of *kuṇḍalinī* are two different experiences. Most aspirants consider *prāṇotthāna* as the awakening of the *kuṇḍalinī*, which is a big mistake.

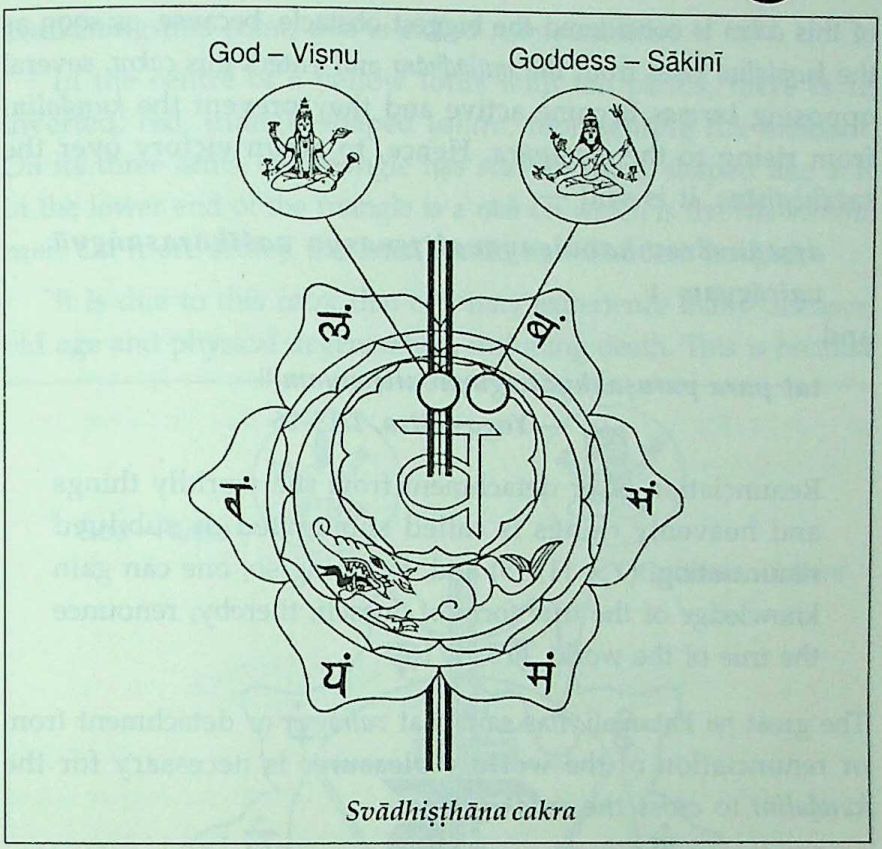
For activation of this *cakra*, the aspirant should meditate on this *cakra*, on the origin of the nose, perform *mūla bandha* and *antaḥ kumbhaka*, internal retention, and imagine that his *kuṇḍalinī* is rising and its energy is fusing with his *prāṇa*.

SVĀDHIṢṬHĀNA CAKRA

Sva means one's own and *adhiṣṭhāna* means residing place. This is the centre of *tūlāvidyā*, i.e., personified ignorance.

It looks like a lotus with six petals, saffron hue-coloured inside which is a white coloured *yantra*, representing water element that is of the shape of the moon on the fourth night after the new moon day. The outer boundary of this *yantra* has eight petals, pointed outwards, and the inner boundary has eight petals, pointed inwards. These signify the conscious and subconscious traits. Inside the Moon-shaped *yantra*, is a crocodile, which is the vehicle of *kārmic* tendencies (tendecies of actions embedded, since many births) and subconscious life. In the centre of the inner

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Svādhiṣṭhāna cakra

lotus is the *bīja mantra*, ***vaṁ***. On it, are seated the deities, Lord Viṣṇu and Goddess Rākinī.

On its awakening *tūlāvidyā*, i.e., the personified ignorance is destroyed and, as a result, greed, anger and other passions are removed. Also, the aspirant becomes radiant like the sun and gains the capability of writing poetry. This *cakra* is the storehouse of *sañcita* (stored *karma*s of many births) and *kriyamāna* (the *karma*s being worked out in the present) *karma*s. Hence, birth and death of a person are related to this *cakra*. The Vedic texts call it *hiraṇyagarbha*. *Karma*s remain recumbent, here, awaiting their turn to give birth, in future, to the individual soul, while in the *mūlādhāra karma*s, related to present birth (*prārabdha karma*), are in active state. In the process of *kuṇḍalinī* awakening, activation

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of this *cakra* is considered the biggest obstacle, because, as soon as the *kuṇḍalinī* rises from the *mūlādhāra* and enters this *cakra*, several opposing *karmas* become active and they prevent the *kuṇḍalinī* from rising to the *maṇipūra*. Hence, to attain victory over the *svādhiṣṭhāna*, it is said —

dṛṣṭānuśravikavaiṣayavaitṛṣṇasya vaśīkārasaṅgyā vairāgyam ।

and

tat para puruṣakhyāterguṇavaitṛṣṇyam ॥

— *Yoga-Sūtra*, 1/15-16

Renunciation of or detachment from the worldly things and heavenly things is called subjugated or subdued renunciating. (*YS*, 11/15) and, by doing so, one can gain knowledge of the true form of oneself, thereby, renounce the true of the world. (*YS*, 1/16)

The great *ṛṣi* Patañjali, has said that *vairāgya* or detachment from or renunciation of the worldly pleasures is necessary for the *kuṇḍalinī* to cross the *svādhiṣṭhāna*.

On its activation, the aspirant becomes free of fear of water, there is rise of inner knowledge, knowledge of the stars and *rasa jñāna* (knowledge of *Āyurveda*). For activation of the *svādhiṣṭhāna* the aspirant should practise meditation on the *cakra*, *aśvinī-mudrā* and *vajrolī-mudrā* (women should try *sahajolī* and *ojhī mudrā*). The practice of *śalabhāsana* and *dhanurāsana* is also helpful.

MAṆIPŪRA CAKRA

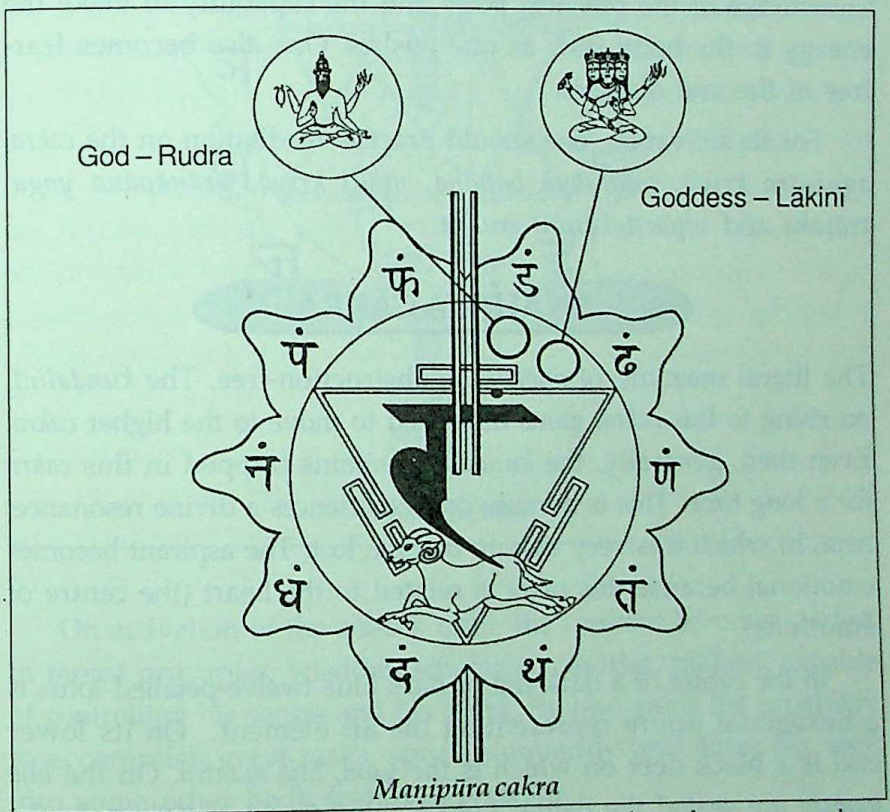
The literal meaning of *maṇipūra* is the city of gems. In Yoga, *maṇi* means divine sight, the ability to experience the whole world, altogether. On activation of this *cakra*, one gains will-power, confidence, skill in his work, physical energy and full awareness and active. Because the aspirant gains so many divine powers by

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awakening this *cakra*, this is called *maṇipūra cakra*.

In the centre of a yellow lotus with ten petals, there is an inverted, red, triangle-shaped *yantra*, representing fire element. On its three arms, the triangle has *svastika* signs, shaped like a T. In the lower end of the triangle is a *rāṁ* on which is the *bīja mantra*, *raṁ*. On it are seated the Lord Rudra and Goddess Lakṣmī.

It is due to this *cakra* that one may experience many diseases, old age and physical degeneration, including death. This is because



Maṇipūra cakra

the *amṛta* (elixir) that emerges from the *bindu cakra* vapourizes on reaching this *cakra*. Hence, the body becomes weak, gradually. This is why Tantra texts state that the residing centre of the *kuṇḍalinī* is *mūlādhāra*, its play ground is *svādhiṣṭhāna* and its centre of spiritual activation is *maṇipūra*. The *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* could well recede after reaching this *cakra* but, once, it has crossed this

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centre, it returns only after it has experienced Totality. It is the point of meeting of the *prāṇa* and *apāna*. Normally, when one breathes in, the *prāṇa* rises from the navel to the throat and the *apāna* rises from the *mūlādhāra* to the navel. The reverse happens when we breathe out. Changing this normal process is the activation of *maṇipūra cakra*.

On activation of this *cakra*, the aspirant gains the power of creation and destruction, protecting the self, prosperity, full knowledge of the physical body and the capability to make the energy in the body flow as one wishes. One also becomes fear-free of fire and diseases.

For its activation, one should practise meditation on the *cakra*, *agnisāra kriyā*, *uḍḍīyāna bandha*, *nauli kriyā*, *prāṇāpāna yoga*, *trāṭaka* and *viparītakaraṇī-mudrā*.

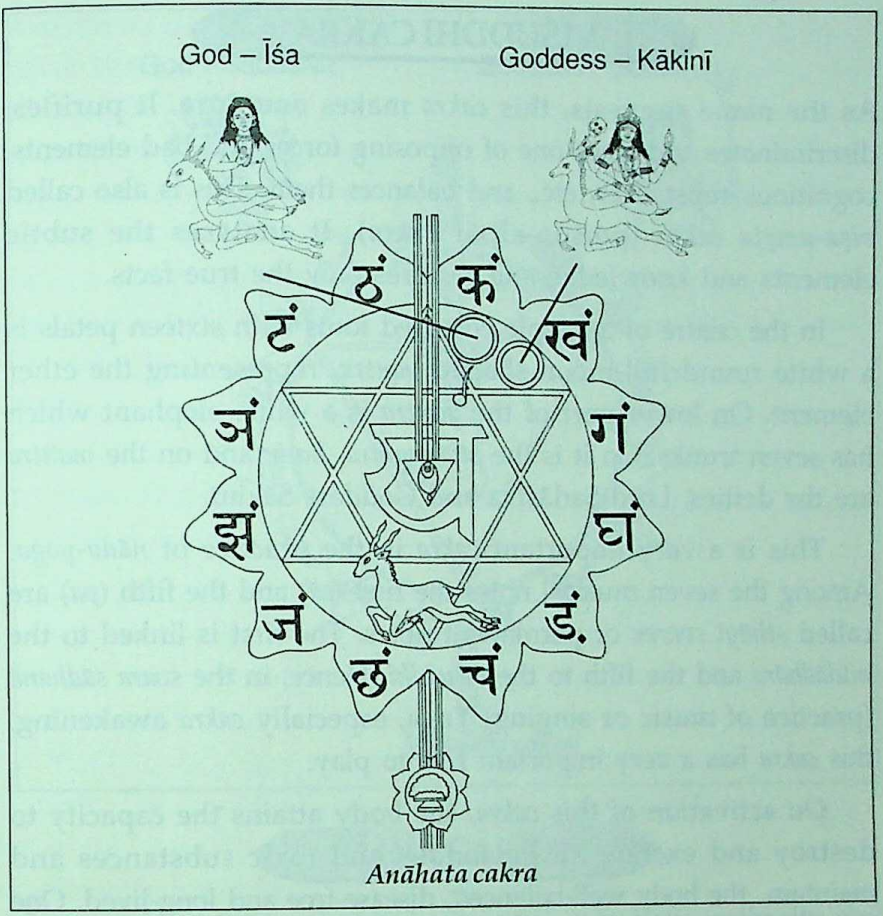
ANĀHATA CAKRA

The literal meaning of *anāhata* is obstruction-free. The *kuṇḍalinī*, on rising to this *cakra*, gains the speed to move to the higher *cakra*. Even then, generally, the *kuṇḍalinī* remains trapped in this *cakra* for a long time. This is because one experiences a divine resonance, here, in which it is very easy to become lost. The aspirant becomes emotional because this *cakra* is related to the heart (the centre of emotions).

In the centre of a dark red or dark blue twelve-petalled lotus is a hexagonal *yantra* representing the air element. On its lower end is a black deer on which is the ***yaṁ***, *bīja mantra*. On the *bīja mantra* are seated the deities Lord Īśa and Goddess Kākinī. In the centre of this *cakra* is an inverted triangle in which a divine light burns eternally. In it is a radiant *bāṇa liṅga* (symbol of Lord Śiva). This is the epitome of the soul.

Under this *cakra* is a lotus with red petals, related to this *cakra* in which is a *kalpavṛkṣa* (the divine tree that fulfils all wishes).

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Anāhata cakra

On activation of the *anāhata cakra*, the aspirant becomes perfect in moral principles, wisdom, scholarly activities, radiant, capable of controlling his senses and his mind. He also gains the capability to accomplish great tasks, speak eloquently and enter his soul into some other body (*parakāyā praveśa*).

For its activation, practise meditation on the *cakra*, *ajapā-japa*, *bhrāmarī prāṇāyāma*, *navadhā bhakti*, *prārthanā*, *japa-yoga* and meditating on the emotions, rising from the heart.

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VIŚUDDHI CAKRA

As the name suggests, this *cakra* makes one pure. It purifies, discriminates and frees one of opposing forces and bad elements, cognitious substances, etc., and balances them. This is also called *viṣa-amṛta cakra* (poison-elixir *cakra*). It analyses the subtle elements and knowledge and restores only the true facts.

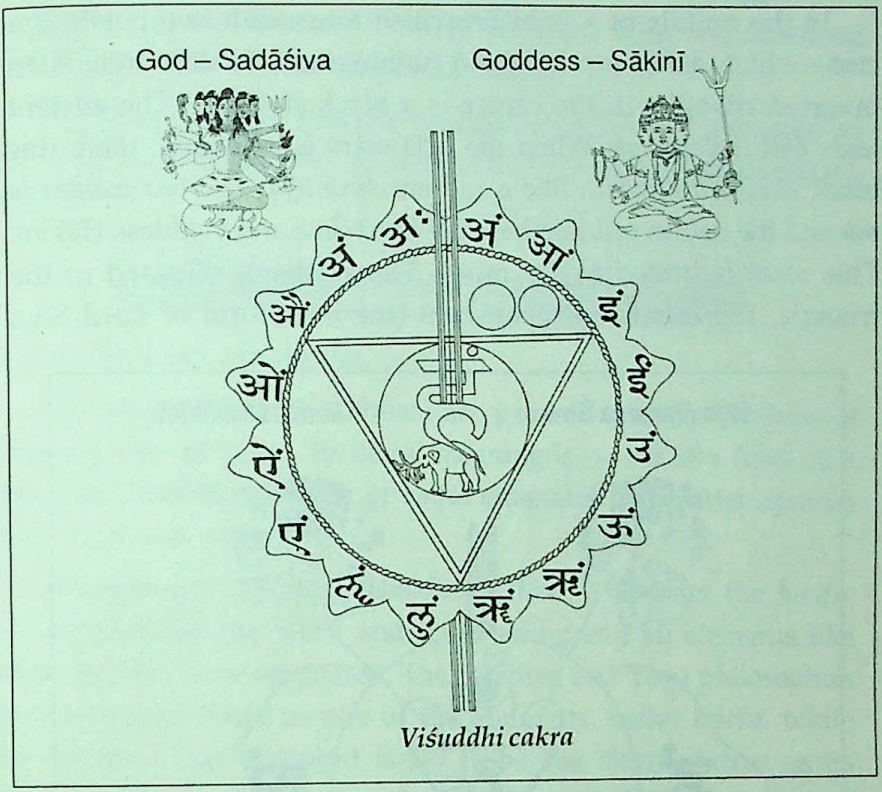
In the centre of a purple coloured lotus with sixteen petals is a white round full-moon shaped *yantra,* representing the ether element. On lower part of the *yantra* is a white elephant which has seven trunks. On it is the *bīja mantra,* ***haṁ,*** and on the *mantra* are the deities, Lord Sadāśiva and Goddess Sākinī.

This is a very important *cakra* in the practice of *nāda-yoga.* Among the seven musical notes the first (*sā*) and the fifth (*pa*) are called *sthāyī svara*s or permanent notes. The first is linked to the *mūlādhāra* and the fifth to the *viśuddhi.* Hence, in the *svara sādhanā* (practice of music or singing) Yoga, especially *cakra* awakening, this *cakra* has a very important role to play.

On activation of this *cakra,* the body attains the capacity to destroy and excrete all poisonous and toxic substances and maintain the body well-balanced, disease-free and long-lived. One gains the power of reading the thoughts of others and one gains full control over hunger and thirst. The physical body undergoes a complete rejuvenation and transformation. One gains eternal youth. One becomes omniscient and gains the knowledge of all Vedas and the ancient texts. One also becomes fearless, free from premordial emotions and gains all good qualities.

For activation of this *cakra,* practise *bhujaṅgāsana, sarvāṅgāsana, guptavajrāsana, śīrṣāsana* and *matsyāsana.* The practice of *jālandhara bandha, khecarī-mudrā, ujjayī prāṇāyāma,* meditation on the *cakra, viparītakaraṇi-mudrā* and concentration on *prāṇa* in the throat, while breathing, are also helpful.

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Viśuddhi cakra

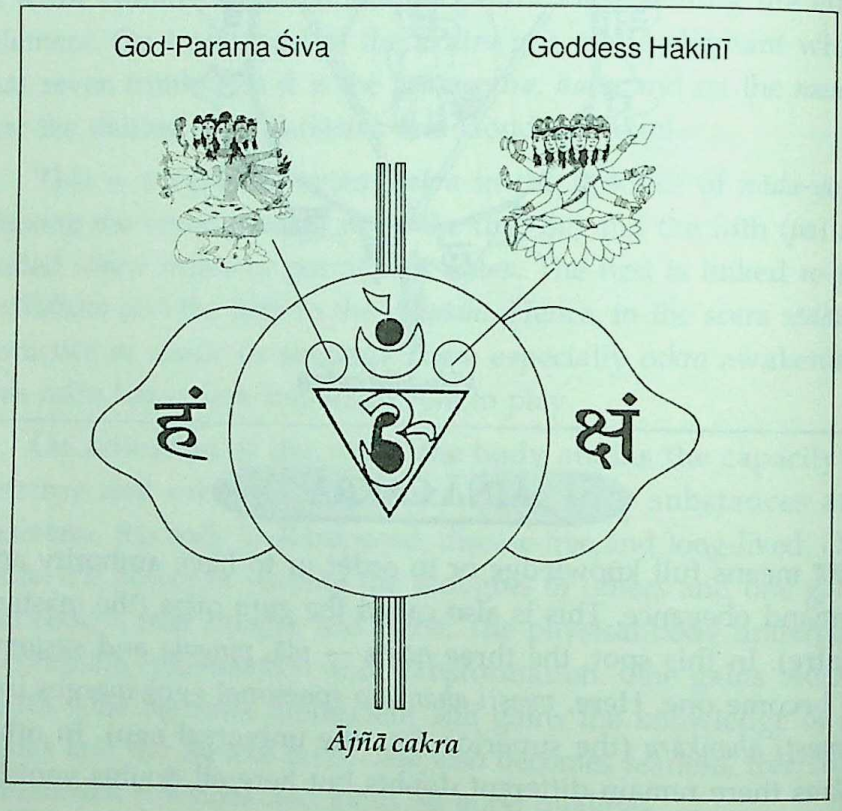
ĀJÑĀ CAKRA

Ājñā means full knowledge or to order or to have authority and demand obeyance. This is also called the *guru cakra* (the master's centre). In this spot, the three *nāḍīs* — *iḍā*, *piṅgalā* and *suṣumnā* — become one. Here, *vyaṣṭi ahaṅkāra* (personal ego) merges into *samaṣṭi ahaṅkāra* (the superior, i.e., the universal ego). In other *cakra*s there remain different doubts but here all doubts vanish.

In the beginning, on activation of this *cakra*, one experiences death-like stillness. But if with patience, one continues with meditation, then, one starts to hear the voice of the inner *guru* (master) and, thus, one is able to progress towards self-realization. This *cakra* is also called *divya-cakṣu* (divine eye), *jñāna-cakṣu* (eye of knowledge), *jñāna-netra* (eye of wisdom) and *tīsarā-netra* (third eye).

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In the middle of a light brownish lotus with two petals is a circle which denotes purity and nothingness. In this circle is an inverted triangle. In the centre is a black *śivaliṅga*. The ancient texts call it *itararkya*. When the *ājñā cakra* is activated, then, this black *śivaliṅga* appears like a radiant *śivaliṅga*. The *bīja mantra* is *oṁ* and the deities residing here are Lord Śiva and Goddess Hākinī. This *cakra* is linked to the mind. The *śivaliṅga*, situated in the triangle, represents *ardhanārīśvara* (the joint form of Lord Śiva



Ājñā cakra

and Mother Pārvatī), signifying the eternal relation of Man and Nature or *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, which is the basis of this world. The activation of this *cakra* results in *mukti* or spiritual emancipation.

Its activation makes the mind concentrated and the brain sharp. The aspirant becomes devoted to truth and he starts to become a witness to the world instead of being a part of it. It also

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gives rise to the power to distinguish between truth and falsehood and to know the reason behind all events.

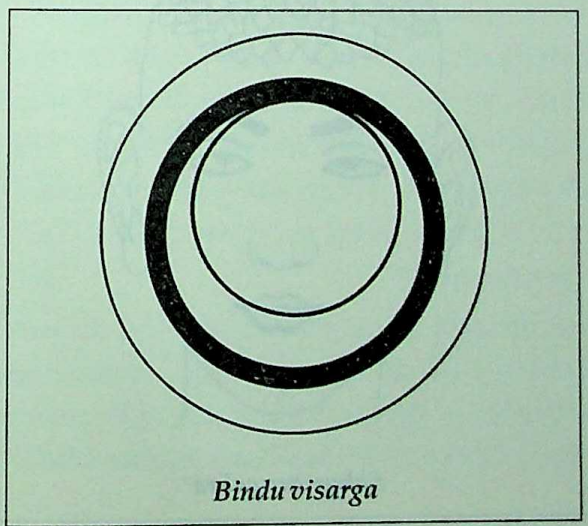
For its activation, practise concentrating on om, the gaze on the nose tip, *trāṭaka*, *anuloma* and *viloma prāṇāyāma* and *śāmbhavī-mudrā*.

BINDU VISARGA CAKRA

This is the basis of creation.

All types of actions (*karmas*) are present here in the form of passions and memory. Its literal meaning is — fall of a drop. It is from here that divine elixir or *amṛta* emanates. All matter appears from here and merges into it.

According to the text *Kāmakalā Vilāsa*, it is from the *bindu*, i.e., a point that the word and its meaning and all elements like ether, air, etc., have originated. The Sāṅkhya and Yoga philosophies have accepted *bindu* as one of the elements, *mahat tattva*, while the Vedānta has accepted *bindu* to be the *īśvara- tattva* as its element. The *bindu cakra* is related to the *viśuddhi cakra* through the *lalanā cakra*. It is situated at the crown of the head, where Hindus have a *coṭī* (long tuft of hair).



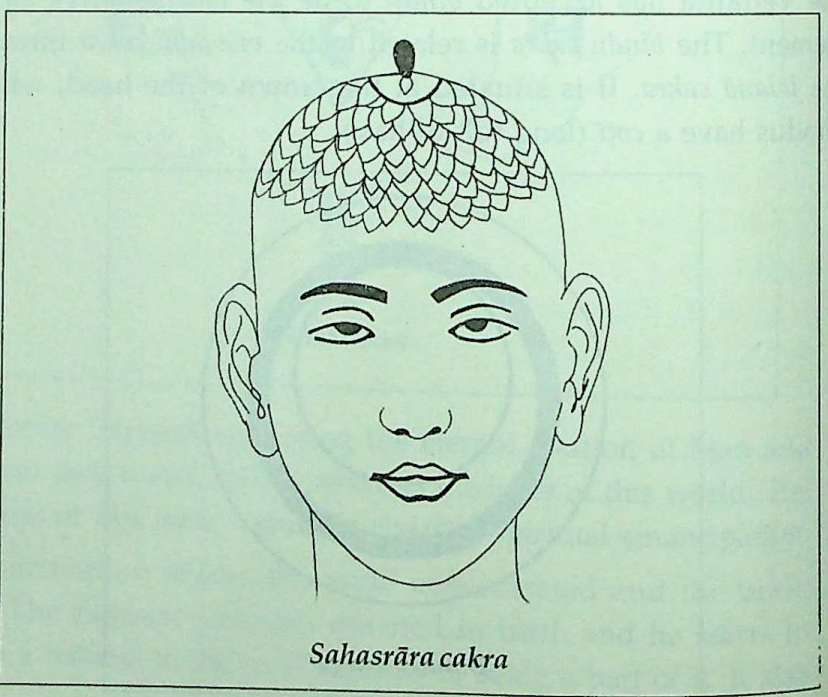
Bindu visarga

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The *bindu cakra* is of the shape of the crescent moon on the second night after the new moon day. It can be experienced in the sky with various stars. It is also related to the *sahasrāra* that denotes infinity. It is the cause of creation of ego because *bindu* also means difference, part or Dvaita (the feeling of distinction from the Supreme). Life means the experience of duality (Dvaita) in Unity (Advaita or Supreme). The *sādhaka*, i.e., aspirant can reach this stage through both the paths of *pravṛtti* (involvement in the world) and *nivṛtti* (detachment from the world), and, then, having given up the ego, progress towards the *sahasrāra*.

SAHASRĀRA CAKRA

Actually, *sahasrāra* is not a *cakra*, because even though it is formless, it appears to have a form. Its literal meaning is one thousand spokes or the source of infinity or Supreme or *pūrṇa brahman*.



Sahasrāra cakra

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It is believed to be in the form of a lotus with a thousand petals. In its centre is a rising sun and in the centre of the sun is a radiant *śivaliṅga* denoting *Brahman* or the Supreme, covered by *māyā* (worldly delusion) and *vikṣepa* (doubts).

When the *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* rises to the *sahasrāra*, then, the Śiva and Śakti merge into one another or the soul and the Supreme become one. This is the stage where *samādhi* begins. The text, *Yoga-Sūtra*, describes this state as *dharmamegha samādhi*. The ancient texts call it *mokṣa* (spiritual emancipation), *kaivalya*, (self-realization), *brāhmī sthiti* (state of Supreme), *svarga* (heaven) etc. Hence, *sahasrāra* is the pinnacle of consciousness. The attainment of *samādhi* in *rāja-yoga* and the activation of *sahasrāra* in Tantra are both same. The only difference is in the means of attainment. In *rāja-yoga* one uses *aṣṭāṅga*, the eight-fold practices, while, in Tantra, one makes use of practices like *kriyā-yoga* or *kuṇḍalinī-yoga*.

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15

Science of Dormant Energy (Kuṇḍalinī Vijñāna)

Kuṇḍalinī is the name of the great recumbent power or secret energy, which resides in the *mūlādhāra cakra*, resembled in the shape of a snake. Practice is very essential for the activation of the *kuṇḍalinī* and one must not try anything without the guidance of a *guru* (master). To begin with and for preparation, one should keep practising *yama, niyama, āsana, prāṇāyāma, kriyā yoga* and *dhyāna*.

When one gains the power to make the *prāṇic* energy flow by one's will through the various *nāḍī*s and *cakra*s, then, under the guidance of a capable *guru*, one can attain self-realization by the activation, awakening and evolution of the six *cakra*s and the *sahasrāra*.

Although it is said that the *kuṇḍalinī* remains dormant in the *mūlādhara*, still, aspirants do experience the *kuṇḍalinī*, rising even in the early stages of practice. Due to the spiritual practices, done in the previous lives, the *kuṇḍalinī* could be naturally situated in the *svādhiṣṭhāna, maṇipūra* or the *anāhata cakra*s of some aspirants.

This is why some people have spiritual experiences and evince divine powers, right from the early childhood, leaving others baffled and perplexed.

Right from the early times, the *ṛṣi*s who had divine experiences gave a gross form to the divine powers they experienced and they worshipped them in the form of idols of various gods and goddesses. The people today show nothing but blind faith when

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they worship these without having any direct experience of their own. They never try to realize the spiritual significance of these idols or try to have direct experience through the means of spiritual practices. This is why today devotion, faith and belief have became a deceit, fraud, trickery, wickedness, ostentation or religious hypocrisy. This is why worship of idols has today become a gross practice, done only for worldly gains. What more can be said, nowadays the ancient texts, like the Purāṇas, are considered nothing more than divine fairy tales or history or epics or novels.

kuṇḍalam iva śīlam asyā

That which is shaped like a *kuṇḍala* is *kuṇḍalinī*. A *kuṇḍala* is round in shape like a ring and the *kuṇḍalinī* is believed to remain, coiled in its dormant shape.

kuṇḍe līyate yā sā

That which remains in the *kuṇḍa* is the *kuṇḍalinī*. *Kuṇḍa* means pit and as the *kuṇḍalinī* remains recumbent in the *mūlādhāra*, it is said to be confined in a pit.

When this divine power manifests, then, it is called by different names Kālī, Durgā, Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī and Pārvatī. And the idols of these Goddesses are symbolic of this power. Kālī is the form of the *kuṇḍalinī*, that is activated in the *mūlādhāra*. Durgā is the form of the *kuṇḍalinī*, that has reached the *sahasrāra*. The *kuṇḍalinī*, in various other *cakra*s, is represented by other Goddesses. Hence, in Yoga, Kālī represents the ignorant or recumbent form of *kuṇḍalinī* and Durgā represents the form with total knowledge and wisdom.

All civilizations in the world have accepted this power to be in the shape of a snake. This is why snakes were so significant in the sculptures and other art forms of these civilizations. Although this power has no shape, because it is matterless and formless,

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yet, it is believed to have an infinite form. Although omnipresent, yet, in the psychic world, it is believed to be recumbent in the body in the *mūlādhārā*, in the form of a coiled snake that has its tail in its mouth.

The experiences that have been attained on the activation of this power by *yogī*s have been described, thus, in the various ancient texts

> Along the *suṣumnā* channel, which is like a pillar of light, rises the golden snake, that is ten inches long and has red ember-like eyes. It moves fast like lightning and with amazing speed, it rises up, awakening all *cakra*s and, then, becomes one with Śiva element in the *sahaṣrāra*.

Anyone can be eligible for activation of *kuṇḍalinī*. There are no restrictions of caste, creed or religion. The only thing, that is needed, is dedicated practice. Through activation, there comes about a complete transformation in a human being. The personality developed is, of course, influenced by personal traits, nature and inclinations. Such a person could become a poet, singer, scientist or proficient in any skill or expert, in any field. He can become omniscient and, thus, perfect in any field. On the other hand, if there is even a bit of carelessness during the activation, he could become mad, atheist or revolting.

Activation of the *kuṇḍalinī* can, at times, also occur without Yoga practice and, due to some shock, accident, full concentration in some work or field and many other reasons. But there is no guarantee of results as the person has no control over the power. Generally, the life of such people becomes unorganized and disturbed, and as they do not have any faith in any path or *guru* (master), their life becomes directionless. Hence, one who chooses a particular path under the guidance of the Guru and dedicates his life to spiritul practice is able to achieve the right success.

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Remember, that if you are interested in activation of the *kuṇḍalinī* just to gain divine powers or worldly success, then, you are playing with fire. On the other hand, if your aim is confluence of Śiva and Śakti or realization of the Supreme, then, you will not face any obstacle, whatsoever. When one is undergoing spiritual practices for spiritual progress and to develop physically, mentally and emotionally, then, one gains the feeling of detachment and one is able to practise devotedly. Practice and detachment are the keys to success in this field.

The text, *Bhagavad Gītā*, states clearly —

abhyāsena tu kaunteya vairāgyeṇa ca gṛhyate ।

— *Gītā*, 6/35

The text, *Pātañjala Yoga-Sūtra*, states —

abhyāsavairāgyābhyām tannirodhaḥ ।

— *YS*, 1/12

The *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* is not present in the physical or the subtle bodies but only on the causal bodies. But, still, this great energy, that is pure consciousness, relates to all the three bodies when it awakes and becomes one with Divine Consciousness. Activation of the *kuṇḍalinī* is the chief aim of human life. This process is called the union of the soul with the Supreme. The followers of Lord Śiva and Mother Śakti call this union of Śiva and Śakti as liberation. Sāṅkhya and Yoga philosophies call this as becoming a witness to the Nature and soul's liberation. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophies call it as gaining of the *tattva vijñana* or the knowledge of the elements. The Purāṇas call it as attainment of *mokṣa* (liberation) and the *mīmāṁsā* philosophy calls it heaven.

In the brain, there are 12 lakh to the power of 500 ($1{,}200{,}000^{500}$) energy centres. *Kuṇḍalinī* when it wakes up, activates all these centres. In an ordinary man, only 1 to 3 per cent, in a scholar 5 per cent, in a person skilled in his trade or field, 7 per cent and in

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the so-called *yogī*s 10 per cent of these centres are active. Only in a *brahma-jñānī* or a person who has realized the Supreme, all the centres will be active. Beginning from angels, demi-gods, gods, etc., up to Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva — in all these highly evolved souls, too, only 10 to 90 per cent of the centres are active.

Prāṇic energy and consciousness are the two forms of *kuṇḍalinī*. *Prāṇic* energy is the cause of action, while *caitanya-śakti* or consciousness gives rise to knowledge and wisdom. Activation of the *kuṇḍalinī* means activation of these two energies in all centres of the brain. This leads to complete release of the *prāṇic* energy and the *caitanya-śakti*.

The text, *Haṭha-Yoga-Pradīpikā* (5/110), states — One who knows the *kuṇḍalinī* can practise Yoga. Hence, one should know about the *kuṇḍalinī* and try to activate it.

The *kuṇḍalinī* may be activated through several means like — 1. Birth, 2. *Mantra* (syllable chanting), 3. *Tapasyā* (austerities), 4. Herbs and medicine, 5. *Rāja-yoga*, 6. *Prāṇāyāma*, 7. *Kriyā-yoga*, 8. *Śaktipāta*, 9. Tantra, 10. *Śaraṇāgati* (grace of the *guru* through service to him), 11. *Karma-yoga*, 12. *Bhakti-yoga*, 13. *Jñāna- yoga*, etc.

The aspirant should choose any of these paths from 2 to 13 under the guidance of a *guru* and, having obtained initiation from the master in that path, he should progress ahead. Activation of the *kuṇḍalinī* happens in a moment. Still, preparing for it could take several lives. One should have a strong determination that, "It might not happen in this life but I shall continue practising, sincerely, till death."

For activation of the *kuṇḍalinī*, it is necessary to purify the *nāḍī*s, *cakra*s and the *tattva*s (elements). For this, one needs to practise *āsana*s, *prāṇāyāma*, *neti* and other *ṣaṭkarma*s, *mudrā*s and *bandha*s. Even just living as a disciple in an *āśrama* and practising *niṣkāma karma-yoga* and eating *sāttvika* food are helpful in

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preparation for the activation.

There are several obstacles on the path of activation of the *kuṇḍalinī*. These are fear, doubts, wrong practice, disease, impurity, imbalanced diet and wrong action, *siddhis* (divine powers or their misuse) and ego.

Activation of the *kuṇḍalinī* can be divided into four parts: (1) Activation of the *iḍā* and *piṅgalā*, (2) Activation of the *cakras*, each, separately, (3) Activation of the *suṣumnā* and (4) Activation of the *kuṇḍalinī*.

First of all, make the *nāḍī*s, *iḍā* and *piṅgalā*, pure, balanced and harmonized through *nāḍī śodhana prāṇāyāma*. Then, activation of the *cakra*s can be done by seven ways. These are (1) Concentrating on the *cakra*s by mind, directly, (2) Concentration on the *cakra*s with the help of music, (3) *caturtha prāṇāyāma*. This is performance of *prāṇāyāma* along with *mantra* chanting and concentration on the *cakra*s, (4) *yoga-nidrā*, (5) *unmanī kriyā*, (6) *bīja mantra sañcālana*, (7) Drawing the pictures of the *cakra*s.

The regular practice of *śāmbhavī-mudrā*; concentration on or the gaze on the nose tip along with *mūla bandha*, *vajrolī-mudrā*, *uḍḍīyāna bandha* and *ajapā-japa*; *jālandhara bandha* along with *viparītakaraṇī-mudrā* and *yoni-mudrā* are also helpful in activation of the *cakra*s. The *suṣumnā* can be activated through *haṭha-yoga* and *prāṇayāma*. In the end, the *kuṇḍalinī* could be activated through *kuṇḍalinī kriyā*s.

In *kriyā-yoga*, there are 19 *kuṇḍalinī kriyā*s. Before the practice of these *kriyā*s, one should be perfect in the following practices. 1. *sarvaṅgāsana*; 2. *ujjāyī prāṇāyāma*; 3. *siddhāsana*; 4. *unmani-mudrā*; 5. *khecarī-mudrā*; 6. *ajapā-japa*; 7. *uttānapādāsana*; 8. *śāmbhavi-mudrā*; 9. *mūla bandha*, 10. Concentrating the eyes on the nose tip; 11. *uḍḍīyāna bandha*; 12. *jālandhara bandha*; 13. *bhadrāsana*; 14. *padmāsana*; 15. *yoni-mudrā*; and 16. *vajrolī-mudrā*.

After these preparatory practices, the 19 *kuṇḍalinī kriyā*s should

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be practised, which are as follows. 1. *viparītakaraṇī-mudrā*; 2. *cakrānusandhāna*; 3. *nāda sañcālana*; 4. *pavana sañcālana*; 5. *śabda sañcālana*; 6. *mahā-mudrā*; 7. *mahābheda-mudrā*; 8. *māṇḍūkī-kriyā*; 9. *tāḍana kriyā*; 10, *naumukhī-mudrā*; 11. *śakticālinī*, 12. *śambhavī*; 13. *amṛtapāna*; 14. *cakra bhrdana*; 15. *suṣumnā darśana*; 16. *prāṇāhuti*; 17. *utthāna*; 18. *svarūpa darśana*; and 19. *liṅga sañcālana*.

The main three *krīyā*s are not mentioned here, because they are taught by the master himself to an eligible disciple, only.

In the end, comes the experience of *samādhi*, which happens, automatically.

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Part-4

Yoga Therapy

As it has been stated earlier, Yoga is a means of *mukti* or liberation or spiritual emancipation. The great *ṛṣi*s had devised the science of Yoga to help one attain the chief aim of every human being *mokṣa*, i.e., liberation through purification of the mind and the body. When it is impossible to go on in the world with a disease-ridden body, how could we hope to progress, spiritually, in such a state? Hence, before we practise Yoga for spiritual purposes, we should make the body disease-free and, then, try to make it pure. This part is dedicated to the cure of various diseases through Yoga.

The root cause of all ailments is an upset stomach. Hence, we start this part with problems related to the stomach and digestion.

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16

Cures Through Yoga (Yogic Cikitsā Vijñāna)

INDIGESTION (FLATULENCE)

Āsanas — *Pavanamuktāsana* (for expelling gas), *supta vajrāsana, uṣṭrāsana, trikoṇāsana, matsyāsana, halāsana, sūrya namaskāra, paścimottānāsana, śaṣāṅkāsana, tāḍāsana.*

Prāṇāyāma — *Nāḍī śodhana prāṇāyāma.*

Mudrā and bandha — *Uḍḍīyāna bandha, aśvinī-mudrā, agnisāra kriyā.*

Haṭha-yoga — *Laghu śaṅkā prakṣālana, kuñjala, neti.* One should also practise *nauli* and *basti* under the guidance of an able *guru.*

Relaxation — *Yoga-nidrā,* concentration and meditation on the *maṇipūra cakra* along with chanting of ***raṁ*** *bīja mantra.*

STOMACH ULCER

Āsanas — *Śaṣāṅkāsana, śavāsana.*

Prāṇāyāma — *Śītalī, śītakārī and bhrāmarī prāṇāyāma*

Mudrā and Bandha — *Yoni* and *ākaśī mudrās.* No *bandha.*

Haṭha-yoga is prohibited.

Relaxation — *Trāṭaka, ajapā-japa, yoga-nidrā* and inner silence. Eat only easily digestible food.

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STOMACH AILMENTS (INTESTINES, ACIDITY)

Āsanas — *Pavanamuktāsana* for expelling gas, *śakti bandha* group of *āsanas*, *matsyāsana, halāsana, tolāṅgulāsana, ardhamatsyāsana, paścīmottānāsana, vajrāsana, brahmacaryāsana.*

Prāṇāyāma — *Nāḍī śodhana, bhastrikā* and *ujjayī prāṇāyāma*

Mudrā and bandha — All *mudrās* and *bandhas*.

Haṭha-yoga — *Kuñjala, laghu śaṅkā prakṣālana.*

Relaxation — *Trāṭaka* and meditation.

ĀMVA SRĀVA (GIRANĀ)

Laghu śaṅkā prakṣālana cures this problem.

INTESTINAL WORMS

Āsanas — *Naukāsana.*

Prāṇāyāma — *Nāḍī śodhana, bhasrikā* and *ujjayī prāṇāyāma*

Haṭha-yoga — *Agnisāra kriyā, laghu śaṅkā prakṣālana.*

PĀṆḌU ROGA

Āsanas — *Sūrya namaskāra, bhujaṅgāsana, śalabhāsana, sarvāṅgāsana, matsyāsana, halāsana, paścimottānāsana, śīrṣāsana.*

Prāṇāyāma — *Nāḍī śodhana, śitāli, śītkārī, khecarī* and *ujjāyī prāṇāyāma*

Haṭha-yoga — *Laghu śaṅkā prakṣālana.*

JAUNDICE

Āsanas — All *āsanas* given above in the category ***Stomach Ailments.***

Eat only easily digestible, simple food. *Ghī* (liquified butter), butter,

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oily food and spices are prohibited.

DYSENTERY

All *āsanas* given under the category ***Āmva Srāva*** **(*Giranā*)**. Fasting is a very good cure.

DIABETES

Āsanas — Yoga-mudrā, bhujaṅgāsana, sarvaṅgāsana, ardha-matsyendrāsana, uṣṭrāsana, gomukhāsana, vātāyanāsana, śavāsana, supta vajrāsana, matsyāsana, halāsana, sūrya namaskāra, paścimottānāsana, tāḍāsana.

Prāṇāyāma *— Nāḍī śodhana, bhrāmarī, ujjāyī, bhastrikā prāṇāyāma.*

Mudrā and bandha — All can be practised.

Haṭha-yoga *— Laghu śaṅkā prakṣālana.*

Relaxation *— Yoga-nidrā, ajapā-japā* and meditation.

VĀYUNIKĀS (EXPULSION OF WIND)

Āsanas — Pavanamuktāsana for expelling gas, *śaśāṅkāsana, bhujaṅgāsana, kaṭicakrāsana, supta vajrāsana, matsyāsana, halāsana* and *āsanas* in which one bends forward.

Prāṇāyāma *— Kapālabhāti, bhastrikā prāṇāyāma*

Mudrā and bandha *— Tāḍāgī-mudrā* and all *bandhas.*

Haṭha-yoga *— Vastradhauti kuñjala, śaṅkhā prakṣālana.*

Relaxation *— Yoga-nidrā* and meditation.

ASTHMA AND OTHER DISORDERS OF THE LUNGS

Āsanas — Sūrya namaskāra (slowly), *mārjaryāsāna, lolāsana, sarvaṅgāsana, uṣṭrāsana, śavāsana, supta vajrāsana, matsyāsana, baddhapadmāsana.*

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Prāṇāyāma — All types except for *śītalī* and *śītakārī*.

Mudrā and bandha — All can be practised.

Haṭha-yoga — *Kuñjala, vastradhauti, śaṅkā prakṣālana.*

Relaxation — *Yoga-nidrā, ajapā-japa,* inner silence and meditation.

CHEST (LUNGS, PLEURISY, PNEUMONIA)

Āsanas — *Sūrya namaskāra, pavanamuktāsana* (for cure of rheumatism), all *āsanas* practised in the standing position, *lolāsana, matsyāsana, kukkuṭāsana, cakrāsana, dhanurāsana, vṛścikāsana, aṣṭavakrāsana.*

Prāṇāyāma — All types

Mudrā and bandha — All can be practised.

Haṭha-yoga — *Kuñjala.*

Relaxation — *Yoga-nidrā* (with counting of the breath), *ajapā-japa* and meditation.

BACK PAIN

Āsanas — *Sūrya namaskāra, pavanamuktāsana* all three groups, *śaśāṅkāsana, mārjaryāsana, lolāsana, tāḍāsana, kaṭicakrāsana, bhujaṅgāsana, pṛṣṭhāsana, trikoṇāsana, halāsana, dhanurāsana, cakrāsana.*

Prāṇāyāma — *Bhastrikā* and *nāḍī śodhana.*

Mudrā and bandha — All can be practised.

Haṭha-yoga — *Laghu śaṅkā prakṣālana.*

Relaxation — *Yoga-nidrā* and meditation.

IMPURE BLOOD (ADRENAL GLAND)

Āsanas — *Sūrya namaskāra* (with speed, till tired), *supta vajrāsana, mārjaryāsana, śaśaṅkāsana, matsyāsana, ardhamatsyendrāsana,*

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uṣṭrāsana, mayūrāsana, trikoṇāsana, halāsana.

Prāṇāyāma — *Bhasrikā.*

Mudrā and bandha — *Uḍḍīyāna bandha* and all *mudrās*, specially concentration of the gaze on the nose tip.

Haṭha-yoga — *Agnisāra kriyā, śaṅkā prakṣālana.*

Relaxation — *Yoga-nidrā*, meditating on the *maṇipūra cakra*. Stop eating salt and fruit. Drink more water.

BLOOD PRESSURE (TENSION AND HEART PROBLEMS)

Āsanas — *Pavanamuktāsana* — first two groups, *ānanda-madirāsana* and all practices of relaxation.

Prāṇāyāma — *Nāḍī śodhana, śītalī, śītkārī, ujjayī* and *bhrāmarī prāṇāyāma.*

Mudrā and bandha — *Aśvinī, śāmbhavī-mudrā* and concentration of the gaze on the nose tip. No *bandhas.*

Haṭha-yoga — *Neti.*

Relaxation — *Yoga-nidrā, śavāsana, ajapā-japa* and meditation.

LOW BLOOD PRESSURE

Āsanas — *Sūrya namaskāra* and all other Yoga *āsanas.*

Prāṇāyāma — All, specially *bhastrikā prāṇāyāma.*

Mudrā and bandha — All.

Haṭha-yoga — *Kuñjala, śaṅkha prakṣālana.*

Relaxation — Meditation.

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SLEEPLESSNESS AND WORRYING (FAINTING, INSOMNIA)

Āsanas — *Sūrya namaskāra, sarvaṅgāsana, matsyāsana, śīrṣāsana, suptvajrāsana, kūrmāsana, śaśāṅkāsana, bhujaṅgāsana, paścimottānāsana, śalabhāsana, śavāsana.*

Prāṇāyāma — *Nāḍī śodhana, kapālabhāti, śītalī, śītkārī* and *bhrāmari prāṇāyāma.*

Mudrā and bandha — *Śāmbhavī, māṇḍūkī, yoni-mudrā* and all *bandhas.*

Relaxation — *Trāṭaka, yoga-nidrā* and meditation.

ARTHRITIS

Āsanas — *Pavanamuktāsana* (first two groups). Give up eating meat and all non-vegetarian foods and drink lot of water.

OBESITY

Āsanas — *Sūrya namaskāra* (with fast pace), *druta halāsana, padahastāsana, śīrṣāsana.*

SWELLING IN JOINTS

Āsanas — *Pavanamuktāsana, udara śvāsana.* Relaxation practices and meditation. Before practising the *āsanas*, keep the hands and legs immersed in warm water with salt, mixed in it for some time.

ITCHING, SKIN DISEASE

Āsanas — *Pavanamuktāsana, makarāsana.* Also see under title blood impurity.

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SHOULDERS

Āsanas — *Makarāsana, pavanamuktāsana* (first group), *uṣṭrāsana, baddhapadmāsana, sūrya namaskāra* and all *āsanas* in which one has to bend backwards, *bhujaṅgāsana, gomukhāsana, vṛścikāsana.*

Prāṇāyāma — All.

Mudrā and bandha — All.

Haṭha-yoga — *Kuñjala, neti.*

Relaxation — Meditation.

NECK

Āsanas — *Grīvāsana, kandharāsana, matsyāsana, suptavajrāsana,* all *āsanas* in which the spine has to be bent.

Prāṇāyāma — *Nāḍī śodhana prāṇāyāma.*

Mudrā and bandha — *Jālandhara bandha.*

Relaxation — *Śavāsana.*

ALOPECIA (FALLING OF HAIR)

Āsanas — All *āsanas* performed on the head specially *śīrṣāsana.*

FACE (PIMPLES, WRINKLES)

Āsanas — *Sūrya namaskāra, sarvaṅgāsana, halāsana, siṁhāsana.* Do fasting.

Prāṇāyāma — All, specially *bhastrikā.*

Mudrā and bandha — *Yoga-mudrā, aśvinī-mudrā, ākāśī-mudrā, viparītakaraṇi-mudrā* and *jālandhara bandha.*

Haṭha-yoga — *Neti, kuñjala.*

Relaxation — *Trāṭaka, śavāsana.*

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TONSILS (ITCHING IN THE THROAT, COLD)

Āsanas — *Pavanamuktāsana, siṁhāsana, matsyāsana, supta-vajrāsana.*

Prāṇāyāma — *Śītalī, śītkārī, ujjayī prāṇāyāma.*

Haṭha-yoga — *Neti, kuñjala.*

Relaxation — *Trāṭaka, śavāsana.*

CHRONIC INDIGESTION

See under titles *Sleeplessness and Worrying* and *Stomach Ailments* too. Do not eat impure, heavy, too much, stale and improperly cooked food. Eat food, only, once a day. Daily perform *kuñjala.*

PYORRHOEA AND GUM PROBLEMS

Āsanas — All *āsanas*, performed by balancing on the head.

Prāṇāyāma — *Śitālī, śītkārī prāṇāyāma.*

Every two to three hours, massage the gums with the fingers.

LEGS

Āsanas — *Sūrya namaskāra, pavanamuktāsana, udarākarṣanāsana, dhanurāsana, ardhamatsyendrāsana, garuḍāsana, vātāyanāsana, praṇāmāsana, kūrmāsana, śalabhāsana.*

Prāṇāyāma — All.

Mudrā and bandha — All.

Relaxation — *Yoga-nidrā.*

SEX ORGANS (PROSTATE GLAND, WOMB DISORDERS AND SEXUAL PROBLEMS)

Āsanas — *Sūrya namaskāra, śaktibandha* group, *matsyāsana,*

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śaśāṅkāsana, uṣṭrāsana, kaṭicakrāsana, tāḍāsana, trikoṇāsana, ardhamatsyendrāsana, garuḍāsana, bhujaṅgāsana. Maintaining celibacy is the best means.

POLIO

Āsanas — *Padmāsana, kandharāsana, dhanurāsana, trikoṇāsana, śīrṣāsana, aśvasañcālanāsana.*

Prāṇāyāma — *Nāḍī śodhana.*

Relaxation — Concentrating the gaze on the nose tip.

DEAFNESS

Āsanas — All *āsanas* practised by standing on the head. Also try *neti.*

PILES

Āsanas — *Sarvāṅgāsana* (for long duration), *śaṣāṅkasana.*

Mudrā and bandhā — *Aśvinī-mudrā* and *mūla-bandha.*

Relaxation — *Yoga-nidrā.*

MENSTRUATION (SEXUAL DISORDERS IN WOMEN)

Āsanas — *Sūrya namaskāra, śīrṣāsana, suptavajrāsana, bhujaṅgāsana, paścimottanāsana.*

Mudrā and bandha — *Aśvinī* and *sahajolī-mudrā.*

Relaxation — *Yoga-nidrā, ajapā-japa* and meditation.

SCIATICA

Āsanas — *Pavanamuktāsana, matsyakrīḍāsana, makarāsana,* all *āsanas* in which one has to bend backwards. Do not perform *āsanas* in which one has to bend forward.

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SLIP DISC

Āsanas — *Advāsana, jyeṣṭikāsana, makarāsana* (for long duration), *bhujaṅgāsana, āsana*s in which the spine is bent or twisted, *namaskārāsana, śavāsana* and *yoga-nidrā*.

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Part-5

Epilogue

THE aim of this book is to make the readers interested in Yoga and to encourage them to rise above the piteous worldly circumstances and attain realization of the *Brahman*, the soul or the Supreme.

Yoga is a path that leads not only to good health and peaceful mind but also to *mukti* or spiritual emancipation.

Jñānādeva tu kaivalyam — According to this statement from the Vedas, the aim of Yoga is to make the mind and the body prepared for realization of the Ultimate Knowledge. Hence, Yoga is the best means of attaining both worldly and spiritual joy.

But one should not begin the practice of Yoga by just reading a book and without the guidance of a *guru*. Otherwise, Yoga could lead to several physical problems and ailments, which could be very difficult to cure through any medical means. Hence, one should surely seek the guidance and help of an able *guru* (master) for the practice of Yoga.

To begin with, one could seek the help of any Yoga expert but, for higher level of practice, one should accept a Super master, i.e., *siddha yogī*, as one's *guru*.

For spiritual benefit and for attaining peace and true joy, it is necessary to live, for some time, in a *yogāśrama* and lead a simple life, eat easily digestible food and try

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to create a balance between worldly action, devotion and Yoga.

I am confident that this book will encourage all *sādhaka*s (spiritual aspirants) and readers and enable them to gain valuable knowledge about yoga and the benefits from it.

I pray God for his kind grace and also for the grace of all great yogis to be bestowed on all readers and Yoga practitioners.

oṁ śāntiḥ, śāntiḥ, śāntiḥ!

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The book presents a study of different types of yoga as all of them are considered essential at different stages in the path of spiritual evolution: *hatha yoga, raja yoga, kriya yoga, japa yoga, laya yoga, kundalini yoga, nada yoga, svara yoga* among others. It starts with a background on the meaning and concept of yoga and its benefits. It examines the theory and practice of yoga under two broad groups — pertaining to purification of the body and purification of the mind, presenting yoga as taught in the Upanisadic texts as well as yoga as scientifically researched and practiced in the modern day by yogic masters. Under these groups are covered the science of the human body and its cleansing, postures, breathing and gestures and the different techniques meant for achieving spiritual and mental excellence through desireless actions, concentration fixation, meditation and yogic trance. Written in an easy-to-understand language, the work abounds in quotations and other references to the sacred scriptures and famous ancient works on yoga to provide a broad base and comprehensive treatment of the subject.

The book will prove extremely relevant to all those simply interested in yoga or involved in studies on yoga, whether they are beginners, scholars, spiritual aspirants.



Swami Shantidharmananda Saraswati is a scholar-saint who has been involved in the quest for spiritual knowledge for years. He received spiritual guidance and wisdom from spiritual masters at the historical pilgrimage centers — Munger, Rishikesh, Benaras and Omkareshwar. He has specialized in yoga, having received initiation from the great yogic master of modern times — Paramahansa Swami Satyananda Saraswati of Bihar School of Yoga, Munger. He currently resides and teaches in his own hermitage.

Second impression, 2006, xxii , 314 p.; b/w photographs; Index; 22 cm.

ISBN 81-8265-000-3 (Paperback) **Rs. 220** **US $11.00**

Srikunj Sadbhavana Manch
'Sri Kunj', F-52, Bali Nagar, New Delhi - 110 015
Phs.: (011) 2545-3975; 2546-6019 *Fax*: (011) 2546-5926
E-mail: dkprintworld@vsnl.net

ISBN 818265000-3

9 788182 650008

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